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WILD WEST

WEEKLY.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE SKY PILOT

OR
THE ROPERS of "ROUGH AND READY" RANCH
AND OTHER STORIES

By An Old Scout



"Hold on there!" shouted Wild, as he rode up; "I reckon you are going a bit too far." A jeering shout was the answer, and then the ropers pulled harder than ever. The "Sky Pilot" was begging for his life.

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—OR—

The Ropers of "Rough and Ready" Ranch

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

ON A SUNDAY MORNING.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in the month of December that Young Wild West and his friends who traveled with him on his horseback trips, in search of excitement and adventure, came in sight of the little town that was called Slipper Flat, Arizona.

The day had been pretty warm, and as the riders had been compelled to travel a very dusty trail all day long, the sight of the few houses grouped at the edge of a sparse piece of timber was a welcome one.

The winding trail over which the stage of the Overland Company plied its way three times a week was not altogether a smooth one. In many places it was even difficult to get along, owing to the rocks that seemed to be there for the express purpose of barring the way of travelers.

"That place don't look like a mining camp, Wild," said golden-haired Arietta Murdock, the sweetheart of the dashing boy, who had made himself famous because of his skill and daring, and his strict adherence to the right while he helped pave the way to civilization throughout the vast region, which, at the time of which we write, was known as the "Wild West."

The girl's remark was addressed to the boy, of course. He was riding at her side, mounted upon his sorrel stallion, Spitfire.

The young couple were leading the rest of the party by about a hundred feet, and as they came to a halt to wait for them to come up, Wild answered:

"Not very much, Et. It is just a settlement, that's all. Probably it is the half-way point between Globe and Nugget Hill. Must be a hotel there that can accommodate us. But if there is not one big enough for that purpose I reckon it will be all right. We can pitch our camp along the edge of the woods back there and be comfortable enough."

Just then Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, and his wife Anna, rode up. They were followed by Jim Dart and Eloise Gardner, his sweetheart.

Then along came Hop Wah and Wing Wah, the two Chinamen who were employed as servants by our hero and his friends.

"Looks like a sleepy kind of place, Wild," the scout remarked, as he brought his horse to a halt and took a look at the scene that lay before him.

"It is Sunday, Charlie," Jim Dart spoke up.

"Yes, I know that. But I reckon it don't make much difference in most parts of Arizona whether it's Sunday or any

other day. Most people in these parts don't have no churches to go to, so they're mighty apt to forgit that it's s'posed to be wrong to work on Sunday. Then, ag'in, you know——"

The clatter of hoofs sounded to the right, and Charlie stopped short.

He looked that way, and so did the rest.

From behind a pile of rocks a horse and rider appeared, right within fifty feet of them.

But there was nothing strange in this, since they noticed that there was a path there which led straight to the trail.

There was something about the horseman that was bound to attract the attention of such genuine Westerners as Young Wild West and his partners were, and as he reined in his horse and looked at them in surprise they returned it with interest.

The man was tall and angular and wore a long black coat which was buttoned down before, a white collar and black cravat showing at his throat.

"A sky pilot!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed, nodding to Wild and Jim.

The stranger could not help hearing the remark, and smilingly he said:

"You are right, my friend. Immediately upon my arrival in Arizona I learned that 'sky pilot' was the nickname for clergyman. But I assure you that I do not mind being called a sky pilot; I rather like it, in fact. It is somewhat suggestive of my calling."

Then he smiled and looked from one to the other of the party, as if he wished to note the effects of his words upon each.

Meanwhile the young deadshot had been looking the stranger carefully over, sizing him up as it were, and his conclusion was that he was honest and sincere, though probably somewhat eccentric and perhaps a little too strong in his belief that it was his business to tell people who were not of his way of thinking what they should and should not do.

However, the boy was quite willing to let him have his own way in such matters, so with a smile, he said:

"Dominie, I reckon you're all right. You needn't go to the trouble of preaching a sermon to us or anything like that. But just tell us what chance there will be for us to get accommodations at the hotel in the village over there."

"I really couldn't say as to that," came the reply. "But from the outside appearance, the hotel, as it is called, certainly can have very few rooms in it."

"That's all right. We'll pitch our camp somewhere, the same as we are in the habit of doing."

The sky pilot looked somewhat puzzled.

"In the habit of pitching your camp and sleeping under a tent, eh?" he said.

"Yes, that's what we do six nights in a week on an average. But say, I suppose you are living at the village."

"I have been there two weeks. I came West to do some missionary work, you know. When I find I have done all I can here I'll go to a mining camp, or some other settlement. Slipper Flat, as it is called, is nothing but a settlement, you know."

"Oh, that's the name of the place, eh?"

"Yes; speaking of names reminds me that I have forgotten to tell you my name. I am Rev. Percival Parks."

"Is that so? Glad to know your name, and I assure you that I like you pretty well, dominie. Now then, I'll tell you who I am. My name is Young Wild West."

Once more the sky pilot appeared to be puzzled.

He looked at the young deadshot as if he thought he might be joking, but quickly changing the expression of his face, he nodded and said:

"A nickname, I presume?"

"No, Mr. Parks, that's the only name I have ever known. It will take too long to tell you all about it, but I may do so later on, for I am pretty sure that we will meet again."

Then Wild hastened to introduce his companions, and when the Rev. Percival Parks had shaken hands with them all, he turned to his horse, which he had left standing a short distance away after dismounting, and said:

"I fear I will have to leave you now. I have an appointment at a ranch about four miles to the south of here this morning. There is to be a Sunday service, you know, and I am to preach the sermon."

"Don't let us detain you," Jim Dart answered, quickly. "You will find us camped somewhere close by when you return to the settlement."

"Thank you; I shall certainly make it a point to call upon you."

Then the sky pilot rode away, and after watching him for a minute or two, the young deadshot and his friends rode along the trail in the direction of the settlement.

Things appeared to be very quiet about the place, and when they rode up they saw very few people, indeed.

Even the front of the shanty hotel seemed to be a lonesome spot that morning.

Adjoining it was the blacksmith shop, with the double doors wide open, and three or four men were grouped there chatting away as if for no other purpose than to kill time.

As the strangers rode up and halted before the blacksmith shop a big and powerful-looking man, who was evidently the blacksmith himself, called out:

"Mornin', friends! I hope you don't want a job done to-day, 'cause I promised the sky pilot last night not to do any work on Sundays. Sorter seems foolish like, but he talked so nice an' got my wife an' daughter interested so much, that I jest had to listen an' then I give the promise. My name is Jeff Rogers, an' I'm the blacksmith here."

"It happens that we don't require any blacksmith work done this morning, Mr. Rogers," the young deadshot answered, as he dismounted. "I hear that this town is called Slipper Flat."

"That's the name. It's about the first stop this side of Globe that amounts to anything. The stage changes horses here when it comes through three times a week. Maybe you folks don't think it much of a place, though," and the blacksmith shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

"I'm sure I think it's all right. We are in the habit of striking all sorts of places, and a great many of them are not as large as this. But say, Mr. Rogers, we would like to stop somewhere around here. We want the privilege of pitching our camp in a good handy place where there is water and grass for our horses. How about it?"

"I reckon you don't have to have permission for anything like that. There ain't a man livin' here as would say you couldn't stop on his property. Thought, though, that if you was goin' to stop in the Flat you would want to put up at the hotel."

"No, I reckon we won't trouble the hotel people. The building don't look to be large enough to have many extra rooms in it."

"You have got that jest right," one of the other men spoke up, with a laugh. "It's called a hotel, all right, but I reckon the most business what's done there is right in the barroom. There's three or four rooms what strangers kin have if they happen to come along when no one else ain't got 'em. Jest now I reckon they're all full, though, so you would have a

mighty slim chance of gittin' beds to sleep in, even if old Bill Grubb took your money an' offered to take care of you."

There was a little creek running almost parallel with the road that ran through the heart of the settlement, and it was not more than a hundred feet from the rear of the blacksmith shop.

Wild turned his horse a little to the left and was able to see how it looked in that direction.

Seeing a clump of trees close to the edge of the creek, and a stretch of pretty rich-looking grass near them, he decided that this place would be as good as any for them to camp.

"Mr. Rogers," he said, as he turned to the blacksmith man "I reckon we'll camp on the bank of the creek right back of your shop."

"Good! That's all my land down there. I've got a strip runnin' back on the other side of the creek, too. Help yourself. It ain't goin' to be said that Jeff Rogers ever turned strangers away when they was lookin' for a place to stop. But one of the boys here has jest said as how he thinks he knows who you are, young feller."

"Is that so?" and Wild looked questioningly at the other men.

"I'm the one as jest said it," came from an elderly looking man as he stepped out. "It strikes me that I seen you once or twice up in Dakota."

"Probably you did, my friend. My name is Young Wild West."

"There!" and the man clapped his hands and looked at his companions in triumph. "I knowed it. It's the Champion Deadshot. It's quite a long time since I seen him last, 'cause it must be easy four years ago. But he wears the same sort of a rig, an' if I ain't mistaken, that sorrel he's ridin' there is the same one he had four years ago."

"The very same, my friend," Wild answered, nodding his head and smiling.

"My name is Bennett," came the reply. "Of course you don't know me, 'cause I never had a chance to git close enough to talk with you, even. But I seen you a couple of times as you was passin'. You kin bet I'm your friend, all right."

They were all more than interested now, and quite a few questions were asked and answered before Wild and his companions turned around the corner of the blacksmith shop and rode toward the spot they had selected to camp upon.

Once they got there they were well satisfied that no better place could have been selected, so the work of unloading the pack-horses was promptly begun by the two Chinameh, and in less than fifteen minutes the camp was pretty well in shape.

"Now then, boys," the young deadshot said, nodding to Charlie and Jim, "I suppose we'll have to make up our minds to take things very quietly. It's Sunday, you know, and there is a sky pilot hanging about these parts. It seems that he has exerted quite some influence, by the way the blacksmith was talking. Well, we won't do anything to change things. It's a pretty sure thing that the Rev. Percival Parks is opposed to the selling and drinking of liquor, and that means that it won't look very well for any of us to visit the hotel to-day. Hop, you hear what I say?"

"You no wantee me go to um hotel Mislér Wild?" the clever Chinnee asked, as if he was greatly surprised.

"You can get along without going there, can't you?"

"Yes, Mislér Wild, me gittee 'long velly nicee, so be. Me gottee lillee tanglefoot yet."

"I knowed it!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed, as if he was angry. "You have always got whisky with you, it seems, though it's hard to find it when you ain't in the notion of givin' a feller a drink. I don't want none this mornin', so don't think I'm speakin' that way to git a drink from you. I never touch the blamed stuff unless I've got a little pain or feel that I need it."

"Lat allee light, Mislér Charlie. Me no givee you some tanglefoot, so be. Me gottee velly lillee, and me keepee till me gittee sickee."

"Which won't be very long, I s'pose," and the scout grinned. Wing, the cook, had busied himself gathering up a pile of fagots and dry wood, so he might go ahead and make preparations for the noonday meal.

It happened that they were well supplied with game, as well as the general run of provisions that were necessary to carry with them on the long, adventurous trips they took.

Hop had nothing else to do, so he walked along the bank of the creek, and soon discovered that the water was inhabited by more than one variety of the finny tribe.

The stream was very deep in some places, but quite clear, and he could see the fish swimming about.

Back he went to the camp, and quickly began arranging some fishing tackle.

"What are you goin' to do now, heathen?" the scout asked, though he knew that Hop of course meant to go fishing.

"Me ketchee some fishee, so be, Misler Charlie. We have fished fishee for suppee, so be."

"Say, Wild," and the scout beckoned to the young deadshot, "I s'pose the sky pilot would think it wrong to go fishin' on Sundays."

"Probably he would, Charlie," was the reply. "but I reckon we don't have to think the same as he does. Is Hop going to try his luck?"

"He sartinly is."

"Well, he has a perfect right to go fishing if he likes, whether it is Sunday or any other day."

Hop grinned at this, and stepping over to a thicket, he soon cut a thin sapling that would answer very well for a rod.

Then the line was attached with the hooks and float, and all he needed was some bait.

But that was to be found in abundance, for the grass in some spots was fairly alive with grasshoppers.

Hop got all he wanted, and then walked along the bank until he came to a spot which he thought would just suit him and started in to fish.

It was not long before the entire party gathered at the spot to watch him, and when Hop kept landing a fish every minute or two, they were all interested and there was scarcely one of them who did not feel as if they would like to be doing the same thing.

In a little over half an hour Hop had caught a big string of fish, more, in fact, than they would need for one meal.

Charlie assisted him in cleaning the fish, and while the two were engaged in the work a horseman suddenly appeared around the blacksmith shop, riding straight toward them.

One glance was sufficient to let our friends understand that the newcomer was a cowboy or perhaps a ranchman.

He was only a young man, but he seemed to be "fixed up" a little better than the average run of the cowboys to be met with.

But since it was Sunday, there was nothing strange about this.

"How are you, strangers?" the horseman said, as he rode up and brought his horse to a halt. "Jest heard that Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot, was here, an' I'm a whole lot anxious to shake hands with him. My name is Tom Ruff, an' I'm half-owner of the Rough-and-Ready Ranch, which is a little over four miles to the south of here."

"Is that so?" Wild answered, as the man dismounted and came toward him. "Rough-and-Ready Ranch, you say?"

"Yes. Quite a name for it, I s'pose. But you'll understand it when I tell you that my name is Ruff, an' my pard's name is Reddy Blake. Ruff an' Reddy, you see. We allowed that we would convert our two names into a name for the ranch. But I s'pose it's all right, anyhow, 'cause our cowboys is a putty rough-and-ready lot, an' they're all mighty pleased at havin' the ranch named that way. I was jest over to see my gal. Been there all the mornin', you know, an' when I stopped at the blacksmith shop, Rogers told me you was camped here. Hope I ain't too fresh in comin' down an' introducin' myself."

"You're certainly welcome, Mr. Ruff."

Then, as he usually did under such circumstances, the young deadshot quickly introduced his companions.

Tom Ruff was certainly a very pleasant sort of young man, and after talking a few minutes he turned to ride away.

But he suddenly checked himself, and nodding to them all, he said:

"Now then, I'm goin' to give you an invitation to come over an' spend a few days at our ranch. Reddy, my pard, is a mighty good feller, an' he'll be mighty glad to have you there. We're goin' to have a big time up here Wednesday. I'm goin' to git married to my gal. She's the blacksmith's daughter, an' her name is Millie Rogers. As soon as the sky pilot has hitched us up double we're goin' direct to the ranch an' hold a party. You kin bet there'll be one lively old time of it. Kin I tell 'em all that you'll accept the invitation?"

"What do you think about it?" Wild said, as he turned laughingly to the girls.

"We are always on hand when there is to be a wedding, Wild," Arietta answered, quickly.

"All right, then. I know Charlie and Jim will surely be satisfied."

"That's what I like to hear you say!" Tom Ruff exclaimed. "But say, I don't want you to wait till Wednesday afore you come over. I want you to come right straight to the ranch to-morrow mornin'. You have got your camp fixed up here, so it ain't likely you want to move it. Another thing, the Rev. Percival Parks, which is the sky pilot, is goin' to hold a meetin' here to-night, an' there'll be a blamed big crowd up to hear him talk. It ain't likely that he's goin' to do an awful lot of good by his preachin', but the boys will come from miles around jest to hear what he's goin' to say."

"We'll come over in the forenoon to-morrow, then," Wild said, so with a nod of satisfaction the ranchman turned and rode away.

CHAPTER II.

GETTING READY FOR THE SKY PILOT'S MEETING.

Noon-time came, and Young Wild West and his friends surely had a rousing good dinner ready for them when Wing Wah called them to sit down.

It was surely what might be called a beautiful day, even though it was not far from Christmas time.

But for that matter fine weather may be expected in Arizona at this season of the year.

There was really nothing to do but to take things easy during the afternoon.

Everything was quiet and peaceful about the settlement, and though a few could be seen moving about, no one came to the camp to disturb the strangers who had chosen to stop there until the following day.

It was not until the afternoon was pretty well gone that they saw any one come near enough to the spot for words to be exchanged.

Then the blacksmith and a middle-aged woman who evidently was his wife and a young girl of nineteen or twenty were seen walking along the bank of the creek.

"There's the blacksmith, Wild," Arietta called out to the young deadshot, who had been taking a nap under a tree along with his two partners, and had just about awakened.

"Is that so, little girl?" the boy answered, as he quickly arose and looked in the direction she indicated. "It seems rather strange that no one has ventured here to talk to us before this. Queer sort of people there must be living at Slipper Flat."

"I know what's the matter," Cheyenne Charlie spoke up, as he rubbed his eyes and got upon his feet. "That sky pilot has sorter charmed 'em like, an' they're all thinkin' about the good place what's s'posed to be somewhere up in the skies for them what dies. Heaven, I reckon they call it, an' from what little I've heard tell of it, I s'pose it's a wonderful place. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm satisfied to stay right where I am. I ain't lookin' for no gold-paved streets, an' meetin' angels with big wings on 'em, an' all sich as that. In the first place, any diggin's like that what's got streets all paved with gold can't be much, anyhow. What's the good of havin' gold so thick as all that? It shows mighty plain that it ain't worth much up there. Down here, meanin' the earth, of course," and he waved his hand to illustrate his remarks, "a little bit of gold will buy a lot of everything else. Up there it ain't likely it would buy two cents' worth."

"That will do, Charlie," Anna spoke up, laughingly. "I fear your understanding of a hereafter is rather vague."

"Maybe it is. But as I said afore, the good old earth, an' this part of it especially, meanin' all what's this side of the Mississippi River runnin' to the Pacific Ocean, suits me. I'll be good on Sundays, an' I'll be good on any other day in the week, providin' I'm let be that way."

Then he turned and watched the three who were walking slowly along the edge of the creek.

They came to within about two hundred feet of the camp, and then paused as if they hardly felt as if they should come any further.

"I reckon they want to come over here and chat with us," Wild said. "I'll just call them."

Then he beckoned with his hand and shouted:

"Come right along, Mr. Rogers. It's mighty lonesome down this way all alone, and we're mighty glad to have some one come and talk with us."

"Is that so?" the blacksmith answered, and then he turned and said something that could not be heard to his companions, after which all three started briskly for the spot.

"We all allowed that it bein' Sunday, you wanted to take things easy," he explained, as he came up. "It ain't been until last week that we've took much stook in Sunday out here

In Slipper Flat. The Reverend Parks comes along an' tells everybody what they oughter do on Sundays, an' what they hadn't oughter do, an' he sorter seemed to have sich a nice way about him, that jest to please him most everybody is satisfied to be still an' easy on this here day. Anyhow, there ain't much in the way of excitement here, unless it's around pay-day. Then the cowboys comes in from the different ranches, an' they sorter stir things up a whole lot. Last Sunday a lot of 'em come over an' tried to bust up the meetin' the sky pilot was holdin'. He didn't git the least bit riled over it, an' let 'em go for a while. Then he holds up both hands an' starts talkin' to 'em, an' the first thing you know everybody kept still an' listened. Then it wasn't long afore he had 'em all singin', an' when he asked 'em to bow their heads while he prayed, more than half done it. Putty good man, that sky pilot is, an' the best part of it is that he don't ask nothin' for givin' his talks. He told us all that if we felt like chuckin' in a little silver afore he got ready to leave here, so he could have enough to pay his way to some other place an' live, it would come acceptable. But it was up to us, he said. We didn't have to do it if we didn't want to. That's what I call a fine man."

The blacksmith's wife and daughter were standing near him in a timid sort of way.

Evidently they were waiting to be introduced.

Wild thought he had better help the man out, so stepping over, he said:

"I suppose this is your wife, Mr. Rogers?"

"Why, yes. That's Martha, my wife. Shake hands with her. Young Wild West. She's a mighty good woman, but she's one of them kind what never wants to have much to say. Funny for a woman, ain't it, 'cause from what I've seen of 'em, most of 'em wants to have a whole lot to say all the time—sometimes too much."

This caused a laugh, as might be supposed, and the woman turned very red.

But when Arietta, Anna and Eloise ran to her and greeted her by kissing her she was more than pleased, and the result was that she quickly made them acquainted with her daughter, whose name was Millie.

After that things went along a whole lot better.

The blacksmith was right when he said his wife was not inclined to say much, but with the girl it was quite different.

When she once got talking she kept at it with a vim.

Having been born and brought up right within a few miles of where she was now living, she could tell a lot about that part of the country, and the girls were just the right ones to draw it all out of her.

The result was that the moments flitted by without being noticed by them all, and the first thing they knew it was time to think about having supper.

When she realized that it was getting so late Mrs. Rogers appeared frightened.

"Why, we must go and get supper ready, Millie," she said to her daughter. "Think of it! The sun is setting."

"Suppose you stay here to supper," Arietta suggested, for Wing, unlike the rest, had already started in to prepare for the evening meal.

"No, no! We couldn't think of doing that. You had better come to the house and eat with us. I'm sure we'll find enough for the purpose."

But this our friends would not do, so after a little coaxing both ways, the blacksmith and his wife and daughter took their departure, declaring that they would see them at the meeting which was to be held in the open air in the little square near the blacksmith shop at eight o'clock.

By the time Wing had the supper ready it was getting dark rapidly, and a couple of lanterns had to be lighted, so they might see what they were doing.

Half an hour later the settlement began to take on a more lively aspect.

The hoof-beats of galloping horses could be heard almost continually, and the shouts of men followed, showing that a crowd was congregating somewhere in the place.

Of course it was easy to guess where this was.

If cowboys were coming in it was quite natural that they should make their headquarters at the hotel.

But since lights were showing from every window in the building, it was a pretty sure thing that business was going on there.

Hop, unable to stand it any longer, came over to Wild and whispered:

"Everything aller light now, Misler Wild. Me wantee talce bilce walk, so be. You knowee where me go."

"There is no need of trying to make anything good out of

you, heathen," the young deadshot retorted, as if he felt sorry for him. "I reckon we'll have to put the sky pilot after you. Probably he may be able to reform you."

"Lat allee light, Misler Wild. Um sky pilot velly nicee Melican man, so be. Me likee him velly muchee."

Then even though he had not gained the young deadshot's consent outright, the clever Chinese slipped away, and after moving down the bank of the stream a short distance, made a bee-line for the rear of the hotel, which could be seen plainly from the spot.

Just about that time a bright light showed upon the open spot that lay directly opposite, a little to the left of the hotel.

It came from the porch of a substantial-looking house, and it was easy to guess that it was from this porch that the minister expected to address his congregation.

Hop saw it, but he paid no attention.

As he got to the rear of the building a couple of men came out, and this showed him the way to get in.

There was no light there, so he was not recognized as a Chinaman, and consequently not interfered with.

He pushed his way through into a narrow hall, and hearing the clinking of glasses and the sound of many voices from a room on the right, he lost no time in entering it.

It was the big barroom of the hotel, and there must have been easily thirty men congregated there.

Surprise was shown as the Chinaman walked in.

"Velly nicee evening, so be," Hop said, as he paused in the center of the room and bowed to the right and left.

There was a burst of laughter, and then the first thing Hop knew he was seized by a couple of reckless-appearing cowboys and pushed to the little bar.

"Goin' to treat, heathen?" one of them said, as he pushed him hard against the bar, regardless of the fact that he might hurt him.

"Whattée mattee?" the Chinaman demanded, as if he were much frightened. "Me allee samee goodee Chinese. Go to Sunday-school in 'Flisco, and learnee velly muchee how to be goodee."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the crowd.

"I'll tell you what, Joe," one of them called out, "maybe he's somethin' like the sky pilot. Wants to be good, eh? Well, just wait till that there meetin' starts. There's goin' to be some fun around here, an' you kin bet we'll bust her up as sure as guns."

Hop squirmed until he got away from the two men who had seized him, and then he suddenly drew from his mouth what seemed to be a live, wriggling rattlesnake.

"Looke outtee," he shouted, as he waved it before their eyes. "Me allee samee gleet magician. Me eattee lattlesnakes for dinnee, suppee, and breakfast, so be."

While there was not a man there who was really afraid of a rattlesnake, the unexpected sight of the Chinaman pulling one of them deliberately from his mouth, as it seemed, was quite enough to make them draw back and become silent for the moment.

Having shown the snake to them, Hop opened his mouth and slipped the head inside.

Then he gave a sudden gulp, and the snake disappeared.

"Now len, maybe you likee me velly muchee," he said. "Anybody hurt me and plenty lattlesnakes come outtee my mouth and bittee Melican men velly muchee quicke."

"Let him alone, boys," advised a man who stood in the background. "Maybe he ain't so wonderful as what you think he is, but I happen to know that he's Young Wild West's clever Chinese. My pard was tellin' me how he seen him here this mornin', an' he didn't have to say more than two words afore I remembered all about the heathen. I've seen Young Wild West an' his pards an' the gals an' the two heathens what travels with him, an' although all Chinamen look alike, I'm satisfied that this is the one what's called the clever Chinese."

The speaker stepped over to Hop, and put out his hand, which was quickly seized and given a hearty shake.

"You allee light, Misler Melican man," Hop declared. "Whattée you nancee?"

"I'm Reddy Blake, a pard of Tom Ruff, who met you this mornin'," was the reply.

"Me knowee. Lough-and-Leddy, so be."

"You have got it right, heathen. I'm half owner in the Rough-and-Ready Ranch an' most of these boys here works on that ranch. They're all putty good, though blamed if they ain't somewhat rough at times. Some of 'em has come over here for the purpose of bustin' up the sky pilot's meetin' to night. I've argued ag'in it, but it don't seem to do no good. They've got a night off, so of course I ain't s'posed to contri-

'em. But I'm sorter thinkin' that they won't go very far afore the sky pilot shows 'em that they're dead wrong an' make 'em feel like a flock of sheep what's bein' chased by wolves."

Reddy Blake, as he called himself, seemed to be about the only one who could come very close to Hop.

What the Chinaman had done with the snake, which was merely a rubber imitation that he always carried with him, made them have a sort of fear of him.

But the ranchman had heard enough about the clever Chinaman to convince him that there was nothing to be feared, so he quickly invited Hop to have a drink with him.

The invitation was of course accepted, and then the two became very friendly indeed.

Hop answered all the questions put to him, and Reddy was much pleased.

"You're all comin' over to our ranch to-morrow mornin', so I understand," he said. "I'm mighty glad of it. I'm goin' out to look up Young Wild West an' his pards putty soon. It ain't likely they'll remember me, though I seen 'em as many as half a dozen times in different places, but never had a chance to talk with 'em."

There was a clamor outside just then, and the next minute half a dozen more cowboys rushed into the barroom, waving their hands and shouting at the top of their voices.

"The Big Notch Outfit has arrived, I reckon," Reddy said to Hop. "They're a bad lot, for the most part, so I s'pose there'll be lively doin's in the Flat to-night. It goes without sayin' that they'll try to make life miserable for the sky pilot an' all of 'em what sticks up for him."

"Young Wild West allee samee thlinkee lat um sky pilot velly nicee Melican man, so be," Hop answered.

"He does, eh? That must mean that he'll sorter look after him if anything happens."

"He fixee allee light, if um Melican cowboys no be nicee."

One of the fresh arrivals happened to hear what the Chinaman said, though perhaps he did not quite catch it all.

"What are you talkin' about, you yaller, slant-eyed galoot?" he called out. "What are you doin' here, anyhow?"

"Lat allee light, my fliend," Hop answered, with wonderful coolness. "You lookee outtee. Me allee samee goodee Chinee, and you no hurtee me."

"There ain't no fear of you bein' hurt, heathen," Reddy Blake spoke up, as he stepped between them. "I'm here to see that you git treated right. Now then, Jake Potts, let him alone, or trouble will start here mighty quick."

A row in the hotel barroom was a common thing, but as was always the case, a lot of excitement was bound to ensue when two men became engaged in a dispute.

Instantly those present took sides.

But there were so many on the side of Reddy that the rest quickly realized that they stood no show, so Jake Potts, as he was called, was forced to give in.

"I'm goin' to tell you one thing," Reddy declared, after something like order had been restored. "You fellers belongin' to the Big Notch Outfit has come over here to break up the parson's meetin'. Some of my boys has come up here for that same purpose. But it sorter strikes me that when you all start in to do it somethin' will happen that will take the starch out of you mighty quick. It seems that Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot of the West, is here in town an' from what I've heard he's on mighty friendly terms with the sky pilot. Now then, you're hearin' this from me, boys. It don't make no difference to me what you do when you have got time off. But if I was you I'd sorter be mighty peaceful-like at this here meetin'."

"What do we care for Young Wild West," the fellow called Jake Potts answered, sneeringly. "I'd jest like to meet that meddlesome young kid. I've heard so much about him that I'm itchin' to pick him up an' chuck him over my head. I'd give ten dollars if he was to show up here right now."

"Hand over your ten dollars!"

The voice came from the door to the hall, which Hop had entered a short time before, and instantly a dead silence came over the assemblage.

Then out stepped the young deadshot into the full glare of the oil lamps that gave light to the room.

Instantly a hush came over the crowd.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING PROVES A SUCCESS.

Hop Wah had not been gone more than a minute when Cheyenne Charlie touched the young deadshot on the arm and said:

"Wild, I reckon the heathen will be gittin' in trouble. S'pose we go over there an' take a peep into the barroom of the whisky-mill."

"I was thinking something like that myself, Charlie," was the reply. "Come on. It won't take but a couple of minutes. I should hate to see anything in the way of a rumpus take place to-night. Evidently the sky pilot has made quite an impression here, among some of the people at least, and it would be a shame for anything to happen that would put a damper on the meeting."

"Go ahead, boys," Jim Dart spoke up. "I'll wait here with the girls until you come back. Then we'll all go over to the meeting."

Wild and Charlie set out straight for the rear of the hotel building.

They were not long in reaching it, and when they heard the voice of Hop inside they hurried to a window which they were able to peer through and took a look inside.

It happened that just then Hop was finishing his performance with the rubber snake.

"Everything seems to be all right, Charlie," the young deadshot whispered. "If nothing further takes place, I reckon there will hardly be any trouble."

But just then the man called Jake Potts began talking.

Then Wild and Charlie quickly came to the conclusion that he was one of the so-called bad men, and that he was looking for trouble.

"You stay here and keep a watch on what goes on," the young deadshot whispered. "I'll go on inside, and be ready in case that fellow undertakes to harm the heathen."

"Right you are, Wild," and the scout tapped the butt of a revolver significantly. "You kin bet your life that there ain't goin' to be nothing very bad that will happen to Hop, not if I know it."

Wild quickly reached the door, and entered the narrow hall.

Then he stood listening at the door of the barroom.

It was not very long before he heard his name mentioned.

He also heard every word Jake Potts said, and angered for the moment, he quickly threw open the door and stepped inside, as has already been described.

It may have been that Young Wild West had forgotten it was Sunday night, and that a clergyman was scheduled to hold a meeting at the settlement in a short time.

Anyhow, he certainly was ready for business.

The flash in his eyes as he faced the man who had spoken so disparagingly of him, and who had declared he wished he would appear so he might throw him over his head, should have been quite enough to convince even the most ordinary observer that there was trouble brewing.

"Hello, Misler Wild!" Hop spoke up, in his cheerful way. "You allee samee just in timee. Bad Melican man wantee see you."

"That's all right, Hop. I reckon he's got the chance to look me over now. I heard what he said, for I happened to be right at the other side of that door over there. Now then, my friend, I don't want to raise a disturbance here, but I feel duty bound to let you go ahead and throw me over your head. Hurry up about it, for there is going to be a meeting outside presently, and I expect to attend it."

The words were spoken so coolly that the hushed cowboys looked at each other uneasily, while Jake Potts shuffled his feet and then turned his gaze to the floor.

Reddy Blake, the ranchman, broke the silence with a laugh.

"I told you, Jake Potts," he said, shaking his finger warningly at the bad man. "You wouldn't stand a ghost of a show of startin' a rumpus here, anyhow. Now then, you said you would like to see Young Wild West come in, an' here he is. Most likely you'll chuck him over your head an' then kick him out of the place in a hurry. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," Wild said, a smile showing on his face as he looked over the crowd, "I hardly think this fellow meant all he said. He is simply a bluffer, that's all. Surely he wouldn't attempt to throw me over his head, or hardly any one else. He's big enough and strong enough to do it, no doubt, but I reckon he hasn't got the necessary sand in him to try it. How about it, Jake?"

Having heard the name of the bad man mentioned, Wild spoke to him just as if he had known him for some time.

"Oh, of course a feller is bound to say some things that he don't exactly mean now an' then," was the reply. "But don't think I'm takin' it back. But allowin' that it's Sunday night, an' that the sky pilot is holdin' forth with a meetin' here in the settlement, we kin postpone it till to-morrow. Then I'll be ready to meet you in any way you want to come. Makes no difference if it's wrestlin', fightin' with fists, or usin' guns."

"Then ag'in, we might settle it in some other way. I'm somewhat of a roper. I am, though there's them right within the sound of my voice as thinks there ain't no sich ropers as them what belongs to the Rough-and-Ready Ranch."

The last was said in a sort of sarcastic way, and the man flashed a glance at Reddy Blake's men, showing that he was really issuing a challenge.

"Just as you say," Wild answered, in his cool and easy way. "I am very glad that you show yourself to be quite a sensible man. It's Sunday night, as you say, so we'll postpone this little affair of ours until to-morrow. But where can I find you in the morning?"

"I'll be right here at this shebang, 'cause I don't intend to go back to the ranch afore to-morrow noon. We've got a little time off, an' we're goin' to have a rousin' old picnic afore we go back."

"Very well. We'll let it go at that, then."

The boy then started to leave the room, but upon reaching the door he turned, and looking sharply at Potts, he said:

"Jake, if I were you I would let the heathen alone. I reckon that will be about all for the present."

Then the boy walked on outside, and quickly joined Cheyenne Charlie at the window.

Reddy Blake was enjoying a hearty laugh, and the cowboys with him joined in.

Discomfited and not a little angered at this, Jake Potts began expressing himself, using a string of oaths to do it.

But he seemed to know that he stood little chance there, so when Reddy took him by the arm and advised him to stop, he obeyed.

"Come on, Charlie," Wild said, as he turned to go back to the camp. "I reckon they'll behave themselves pretty well now. We'll take the chances on it, anyhow."

They went back and joined Jim and the girls, and then all hands left the camp in charge of Wing, the cook, and walked over toward the house that had the bright light burning on the porch.

When they got there they found as many as fifty people already assembled.

Then the Rev. Percival Parks came out of the house and stood upon the porch.

He was ready to start the meeting.

After making a short address to them, in which he told them that he felt he was called to go to different parts of the country and let every one know the difference between right and wrong, and render them spiritual advice at the same time, he announced that he would offer a prayer.

Nearly every one assembled before him bowed their heads as the prayer was given, and at its conclusion the clergyman started an old-fashioned hymn, singing in a clear voice that was pleasing to the ear.

It happened that several there knew the tune as well as some of the words, so they quickly joined in, and the result was there was a volume of sound.

This must have reached the ears of those in the barroom of the hotel, for in less than a minute the cowboys came pouring out, almost falling over each other in an attempt to get to the meeting first.

Wild and his friends had taken their position well back in the crowd.

All of them expected to see the cowboys coming at any time, and bent upon preserving order, they were ready for them now.

Among the first to appear on the scene were Reddy Blake and Hop Wah.

It seemed that the two had formed quite a liking for each other, and they had managed to be among the first to leave the building.

The cowboys belonging to the Rough-and-Ready Ranch were right after them, and then came Jake Potts and his little crowd.

The latter began singing in different keys, hardly one of them carrying the tune of the hymn the minister was leading in.

That was quite enough to cause the singers to stop, for the men fairly roared it out, and the discord was so great, let alone the extra noise they made, that it would have been impossible for the few who were singing to proceed.

Up went the hands of the sky pilot.

He did not seem to be the least angered, but looked at the faces before him in a way that told he was pained.

"Gentlemen," he called out, as he waved for silence, "I am sorry for this. But I'm sure you mean't no harm. Now then, if you will only listen to me for about twenty minutes I will be satisfied. I am not going to weary you by telling you how

bad you are and how good you should be, but I just want to point out a few facts, which I am sure will strike even the most hard-hearted person within the hearing of my voice."

"Shut up, you foolish galoot!" shouted a man from the rear. "We don't want to hear none of your preachin'. This ain't no place for anything like that. What use have we got for a sky pilot here? We've got a justice of the peace an' that's enough, 'cause when any one wants to git married he kin tie the knot accordin' to law. You had better pack up your dud an' vamoose. If you don't you'll be handled mighty rough."

This was a signal for a yell from the Big Notch Outfit, and they certainly made themselves heard for the space of a minute or two.

In vain the Reverend Parks tried to stop them.

Wild could stand it no longer.

He saw that the man with Hop was doing his best to quiet the crowd, and he made up his mind that Reddy Blake must be all right, though he had not yet become acquainted with him.

"That's the way to do it, my friend," he said, stepping forward and touching Blake on the arm. "This thing has got to stop. If those fellows don't want to hear preaching and singing, they had better light out."

"Go it, Young Wild West!" the ranchman exclaimed. "You'll find me an' all my boys right at your back, even though I know there's some in my gang what come here to have fun an' break up the meetin'. But it seems that they've sorter quieted down a little now. Most likely they feel ashamed of themselves for havin' thought that way."

Wild hardly heard the last of what he said.

He saw Jake Potts doing his best to keep his bunch going and stepping over quickly, he took the man by the arm, gripping it tightly and giving it a twist, which caused him to become quiet instantly.

"Are you the leader of this gang?" the boy asked, looking him squarely in the face.

"I reckon I am. Let go of me, kid."

But instead of letting go of the arm, Wild gave it an extra grip and another twist, and with a sharp cry of pain Potts dropped upon both knees.

"Hold on a minute!" he exclaimed. "Don't do that. You're twistin' my arm out of joint."

"I'll twist your neck out of joint if you don't stop this racket right away," was the quick reply.

Then Wild half lifted him to his feet again, and gave him a push right in the midst of four or five of the cowboys who were making all the racket.

"This here business has got to stop," Reddy Blake called out, as he ran up, his gun leveled at the crowd.

"Hold on a minute," Wild called out to him, as he pushed his hand down. "Put away your hardware. We don't want to use anything like that here. This is a Sunday night meeting, and the sky pilot is going to run it in right shape, too, or I'll know the reason why. Boys, come over here, and we'll just run these fellows away."

Charlie and Jim were there in a hurry.

Wild seized Jake Potts with his right hand, while with his left he grabbed one of the yelling cowboys by the collar.

He made a quick lunge forward and started them going in the direction of the hotel.

That was enough.

Charlie and Jim followed his example, and then came Reddy Blake and his men.

They outnumbered the cowboys of the Big Notch Outfit greatly, and the result was that the boisterous fellows were hustled back to the hotel almost before they knew it.

"Get inside there, every one of you!" the young deadshot called out, commandingly. "If any of you dare to come back to the meeting lead will fly, for even though it is Sunday night, we won't let you break up the meeting without some one gets hurt."

Completely cowed, the outfit hurried on inside the building, and feeling satisfied that they would remain there for a while, anyhow, Wild led the way back to the crowd and met the Rev. Percival Parks, who had no doubt left the porch for the purpose of seeing him.

"It's all right, dominie," the young deadshot said, in his cool and easy way. "I reckon those fellows are subdued now. Go ahead with your meeting. I for one am anxious to hear you talk."

"How can I thank you for what you have done, Young Wild West?" the good man said, fervently.

"Never mind thanking me. I am satisfied that you mean all right, and that you are true blue. Go ahead with your meeting."

"You are all gentlemen, I see," the sky pilot said, turning to the men from the Rough-and-Ready Ranch. "I'm sure you will be rewarded for the way you have behaved in this matter."

"Go ahead, dominie," Reddy Blake called out. "Shoot off all you want to about the good an' bad, an' all that. Preach to us about angels an' golden streets an' sich like. It won't hurt none of us to hear somethin' like that for a change."

Then true to their nature, and the surroundings they were accustomed to, the cowboys broke into a cheer, in which nearly every one there joined.

The sky pilot went back to the porch, and order being restored, he proceeded with the ceremony he had prepared.

He was a pretty good talker, and as he wove a little humor in the lesson he was trying to impress upon them, he was listened to attentively.

He said he would only keep them twenty minutes, but he kept warming up as the minutes passed by, and the result was that it was nearly an hour before he finished talking.

Then he called upon his congregation to join in singing an old-time hymn, and the result was that nearly every one who could carry anything like a tune did so.

The singing over with, the sky pilot announced that he would give the benediction.

"Hold on a minute, dominie," Wild called out, as he walked up to him. "I reckon you have forgotten something."

The boy had his hat in his hand, and without saying anything further he began passing it around.

"I reckon even a sky pilot has got to have money," he said, nodding to them pleasantly. "Don't contribute any more than you can well afford."

There was hardly a man there who did not put some sort of coin into the hat.

Some of the women even insisted upon doing so, and the result was that when Wild had gone the rounds he had about twenty dollars in the hat.

"Here you are, dominie," he said, as he dumped the money upon the porch floor. "Put this in to increase the amount a little."

Down dropped a ten-dollar gold-piece, and the clergyman opened wide his eyes, but did not neglect to give his thanks.

He permitted the money to lie where the boy had placed it, and proceeded to pronounce the benediction.

"Well, dominie," Wild said, as the crowd began to disperse, "I'm mighty glad to have had the pleasure of listening to you talk. We have accepted an invitation to go over to the Rough-and-Ready Ranch and remain there a few days. Probably we'll see you again before we leave these parts."

"I'm sure you will, Young Wild West. You don't know how much obliged I am to you."

"Don't say any more about it, dominie. Good-night."

Then he shook hands with the sky pilot, and Charlie, Jim and the girls did the same, after which they proceeded back to the camp.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEXT MORNING.

Immediately after the meeting broke up the sounds of revelry came from the hotel.

But there was no shooting or any real disturbance, so Young Wild West did not interfere.

Hop had not come back to the camp yet, and it was not until some time after midnight that he showed up.

Jim Dart was still doing guard duty, for even though they were camped in the confines of a peaceful settlement, the regular rule of always keeping a watch during the night was adhered to.

Hop declared that he had simply been enjoying a chat with his friend, Reddy Blake, and some of the cowboys belonging to Rough-and-Ready Ranch when Jim asked him what had kept him away so long.

The boy thought it would do no good to lecture him, so Hop quickly sought his blanket in the tent.

When it came time for Cheyenne Charlie to relieve Jim he was right on hand.

But it was rather quiet over by the hotel, and so it was the rest of the night.

Shortly after daylight Wild, who was taking the last trick at watching, went to the tent and aroused Wing.

"Go ahead and get the breakfast ready," he said. "I have a little business to attend to here at the settlement before we start out for the ranch we are going to visit."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," and the cook quickly crept out of the tent.

The sound of the voices awakened Charlie and Jim, and they promptly got up.

Then Hop was pulled out forcibly by the scout, though he appeared to be very sleepy.

His yells as Charlie dragged him over the ground awakened the girls, and then it was but a short time before they all appeared from their tent.

Meanwhile Wing had kindled a fire and was going ahead in the preparations for an early morning meal.

By the time the sun arose the coffee was boiling away over the fire, and steaks of bear meat and venison were sizzling.

The fish the Chinaman had caught the morning before had been eaten at supper-time, and as they did not care to repeat the meal, no one had thought of catching any more from the stream.

"How soon are you going to start for Rough-and-Ready Ranch, Wild," Arietta asked, after they had eaten breakfast.

"I've got an appointment with one of the men hailing from the Big Notch Ranch, Et," was the reply. "I believe I spoke about it last night."

"A little shooting match, I suppose," the girl said, with a smile. "Don't hurt him, Wild. Probably he had been drinking too much last night when he was so insulting and boisterous."

"It's a wonder you don't say that I shouldn't let him shoot me, Et."

"Well, it has got so that I hardly fear anything like that happening, Wild. You are altogether too quick for such men as he must be."

"Glad you think that way. Well, the truth is I do myself. I suppose that sometimes I imagine that I am about the best there is in the line of shooting. I shouldn't feel that way, I know, but it does appear as if I am. However, I don't mean to lose any caution, and I'll always be on the watch no matter how slow or awkward my opponent happens to be."

At that moment they heard some one calling from the direction of the blacksmith shop, and looking that way they saw Millie Rogers approaching carrying a basket.

"The blacksmith's daughter," Wild said. "She is making an early call. I hardly thought she would be up yet."

"Oh, folks generally rise pretty early in this part of the country, Wild."

"Not always. I have been in places where it would be eight o'clock before you would see the smoke rising from a chimney."

"But not in a warm climate like this, Wild."

"How about down in Mexico?" and the boy laughed.

"That is altogether different. The people as a rule are very lazy and indifferent there."

Then Arietta started to meet the girl.

"Good-morning," Millie called out, pleasantly. "I hope I am in time."

"You certainly are in time," Arietta answered, looking at her wonderingly.

"I don't know about that," and the girl shook her head as she looked at Wing, who had started to clear away the remains of the early breakfast. "I have some fresh eggs, and a loaf of bread that mother told me to take to you for your breakfast."

"Oh, you are too late for breakfast, then," Arietta answered. "Wild was inclined to rise rather early this morning, so of course the rest of us did the same. Our cook got the breakfast ready, and there was nothing for us to do but to sit down and eat."

"All right. I suppose it makes little difference," Millie answered. "The eggs will come in handy for some other meal."

Arietta knew quite well that they intended to eat the noon-day meal at Rough-and-Ready Ranch, but of course she did not refuse the little gift.

The rest all greeted the girl pleasantly, and then thinking it a good time to go and look for Jake Potts, Wild nodded to his sweetheart and said:

"Now then, Et, I reckon we'll take a walk over to the hotel and get what news there is to be had. We'll leave here in about an hour. Come on, boys."

Charlie and Jim were ready, so the three promptly walked away from the camp.

Hop Wah no sooner saw them depart than he started for the hotel.

But he headed for the back door, for he generally made it a rule to always enter a place where liquor was sold by that way.

The young deadshot and his partners walked leisurely around to the front of the hotel.

The barroom door was wide open, and voices could be heard within.

Wild walked up and peered inside.

The proprietor was not there, but his hired man was busy cleaning up the room, while a solitary man was leaning against the bar, a bottle and glass before him.

When the young deadshot recognized the man as the one he wanted to meet, he gave a nod of satisfaction and promptly walked in.

Then he shot a quick glance about the room, and saw that there were at least half a dozen men sleeping, some of them lying stretched upon the floor, and others upon chairs with their heads resting on tables.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," the boy called out, in his cool and easy way.

Potts was so engrossed in his conversation with the bartender that he scarcely saw the newcomer until the words were spoken.

He looked up and gave a violent start.

"Mornin', Young Wild West," he answered, affecting an indifference which certainly he could not have felt just then. "Around a little early, I see."

"Yes, I thought probably you might change your mind and go away before we settled the little difficulty that arose last evening."

"Pshaw! I thought you would forgit all about that," and the rascal shrugged his shoulders.

"I never forget such things. I believe you said you would meet me this morning and we would settle accounts in any way I desired. You also made a remark about you being an expert with a rope. Now see here, Jake Potts. I don't want to hurt a hair of your head, so I won't take advantage of you by challenging you to step outside and shoot it out with me. I'll tell you what we'll do. You have got a rope with you, of course."

"I certainly have. It's hitched to my saddle out in the shed where my horse is."

"Well, I have one, too, which I can get in a hurry. We'll go outside and have a lasso duel. What do you say?"

"Meanin' by that, I s'pose, that the one which catches the other first is the best man."

"That's it exactly."

"All right, I'm dead game on that point. I'm dead game, anyhow, for that matter, but it's for you to say which way we're goin' to settle it."

"The roping will do, I reckon."

At that moment Hop stepped in.

"Hop," the young deadshot said, turning to him quickly, "you're just in time. Run back to the camp and fetch my rope here."

"Allee light, Misler Wild. Me do lat velly muchee quickee, so be," and out he went.

Charlie and Jim had remained outside, but had heard all that was said.

They now stepped in, and looked about the room.

"Goin' to rope the measly coyote an' drag him over the ground a little bit, Wild?" the scout asked, as he looked at Potts disgustedly.

"I told him I didn't want to hurt him any, Charlie. We are just going to have a lasso duel."

"I heard you say that. But that means that he's goin' to git dragged over the ground a little, an' I know it."

"Never you mind," Potts snapped, half angrily. "Me an' Young Wild West is goin' to settle this business, an' you kin bet your life that I'm comin' out at the top of the heap."

"I don't want to bet my life on anything jest now, but I'll bet you ten dollars that you don't."

"I ain't got no money to bet, but jest wait."

Charlie gave a sneer, and then turned and looked at the sleepers in the big barroom.

"Say, Jim," he said, as a grin suddenly appeared on his face, "jest wait till the heathen comes back. I reckon it's about time them fellers woke up."

"About time, I should think," was the reply.

Then Charlie actually laughed as he thought of what he intended to have done.

Hop was not long in returning with Wild's lariat.

Then Potts turned toward the bunch of sleepers and called out:

"Come on, boys. There's goin' to be a lasso duel, an' I want you to see that I git fair play."

Even though he called out in a loud voice, none of the sleepers stirred.

"Say, heathen," Charlie said, catching the Chinaman by the arm, "that bunch of measly coyotes has got to be woke up. I reckon you know what to do. Got any of them things with you? You know what I mean."

"Fireclackee," Hop answered, promptly.

"That's it. A good big one."

"What's that you say?" the man in charge of the place spoke up, excitedly. "What does he mean by fireclackee? I s'pose, though, it's a firecracker, meanin' that you're goin' to set one off an' make a loud noise."

"You have hit it just right, pard," the scout answered, with a grin.

"But you had better not do it. The boss is asleep."

"That's all right. It won't hurt him to be woke up. The gang has got to be woke up mighty quick, an' this here heathen of ours is goin' to do it. Go ahead, Hop. Touch off the biggest firecracker you have got, but see to it that you put it right in the middle of the bunch. I want to see how they act when it goes off."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie. Me havee do evellythling you say, so be. You velly smartee Melican man. Me velly smartee Chinees. Me fixee velly muchee quickee."

Wild hesitated a moment, for he did not know whether it would be advisable to create such a racket in the early morning at the hotel.

But when he saw Jim smiling expectantly he decided to let Hop go ahead.

The clever Chinees was not long in producing one of the home-made firecrackers he invariably had on his person.

Then he coolly lighted a big black cigar which he found in one of his pockets, and after giving a few puffs upon it, turned his attention to the sleepers.

He stepped around into about the center of the bunch, and placed the cracker on the floor.

Then he touched the lighted end of his cigar to the fuse, and walked leisurely over to the bar.

Jake Potts was looking on with considerable interest, while the hired man acted very much as if he feared very bad results.

But he did not have to wait but a few seconds.

Then there was a sharp hiss and a sputter, and—

Bang!

A flash went up, and a cloud of smoke instantly almost filled the room.

Cries of fear and a rattling of chairs and tables and the scuffling of feet was the immediate result.

Wild and his partners stepped to the door, for they knew that Hop generally used a powerful chemical which created a smoke that would choke any one in the making of his fireworks.

They got out just in time to escape the effects of this, but Jake Potts and the bartender were not so lucky, and when they came out they were coughing and wiping their eyes.

Meanwhile the cowboys who had been so rudely disturbed from their slumber were making an awful racket within.

But it was not long before they came tumbling out of the door and through the windows, and once they were outside they were so excited that they knew not which way to turn or just what to do.

The clever Chinees had slipped out by the back way, and he now came around the corner of the house, smiling pleasantly.

"Velly nicee morning, so be," he said, addressing Jake Potts.

"You're a good one, heathen," the rascally cowboy answered, forcing a smile. "Blamed if that wasn't the greatest thing I ever seen."

"What was it, anyhow, Jake? I thought the house had been blowed up," one of the men said, as he walked over, his face very white.

"You remember of goin' to sleep in there, don't you?" Jake asked.

"I s'pose I do. I was putty well filled up with jig-water, an' the last I knowed I was settin' at a table."

"Well, you all went to sleep, an' you slept right on till a little while ago. Then along comes this funny heathen of Young Wild West's an' he sorter wakes you up. He lighted a big firecracker, after puttin' it right among you. That's all there is in the way of tellin' what happened; leastwise, all I kin say."

But that was enough in the way of an explanation.

The victims of the joke at once became rather angry, and a couple of them threatened to have revenge.

But Jake Potts advised them to let it go, and then informed them that he was about to have a duel with Young Wild West, and that the weapons to be used were nothing more than the ordinary lassoes used by cowboys in roping cattle.

"I want you to see that I git fair play, boys. You all know the little difficulty me an' Young Wild West had last night. We're goin' to settle it now by this ropin' business. Fair play is what I want, so bear that in mind. If I don't git fair play,

you know what to do. You have all got guns, an' you know how to use 'em."

"They've all got guns, all right," Cheyenne Charlie spoke up, "but I'll tell you right now that if any one of 'em pulls a gun while this here little duel is goin' on it will be the last thing he'll ever do on earth. You hear that from me, from the lips of Cheyenne Charlie, who was born in old Cheyenne. Whoopee, whoopee! Wow, wow, wow!"

CHAPTER V.

THE LARIAT DUEL AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

There was no doubt but that Cheyenne Charlie was very much in earnest, and when he had given vent to his old-time cowboy yell, he strutted back and forth with the air of a conqueror.

It was not strange that the loud report of the firecracker had brought a number of people to the scene, for about every one in the settlement must have heard it.

All sorts of questions were asked, and Jim Dart took it upon himself to explain matters.

He also told the men in the crowd that there was going to be a peculiar sort of duel to take place right away.

"See here, Potts," Wild said, after things became a little quieted, "probably you would like to ride horseback while this little business is going on."

"I don't know as I would. I reckon I kin sling a rope while I've got my feet on the ground about as good as any other way."

"Very well. It makes do difference to me. We'll have it out without horses, then. Come on. Let's get out in the road, so we'll be clear of everything. We don't want any trees to interfere with us, you know."

"That's right. How are you goin' to do this, anyway? There oughter be some kind of arrangements made, so we'll both understand how we're to go at it."

"Oh, that will be easy enough. You get over to the other side of the street. It's a pretty wide space right here. A sort of square, it seems to be. I'll walk down toward the blacksmith shop, and when I'm about a hundred and fifty feet from you I'll stop. Then some one can fire a shot and we'll start toward each other and see who can handle his rope the best. I reckon that will be about all there is to it."

"That suits me. You kin see that I ain't no kicker, Young Wild West. I'll agree to everything. As I said a little while ago, it wouldn't make much difference to me how we fought this here duel, though of course you bein' the Champion Deadshot of the West might make you have the best chance."

Wild knew that the so-called duel would not amount to very much, so he wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible.

Without waiting any further he started in the direction of the blacksmith shop, while Potts walked across the street, and took up his position on a little knoll, probably thinking it would be of some advantage for him to do so.

Cheyenne Charlie took it on himself to give the signal.

"Say when you're ready," he called out, as Wild came to a stop just about a hundred and fifty feet from his opponent.

"I'm ready now, Charlie," the young deadshot answered.

"So am I," came from Potts, who was busy swinging his rope, for he had the noose all ready, and his face wore a confident smile.

"All right, then."

The scout quickly pulled a gun, and pointing it in the air, fired a shot.

The moment the report sounded Jake Potts ran down from the knoll straight toward the young deadshot.

Wild did not run.

He walked leisurely to meet the man, his rope in readiness.

The crowd rushed up and looked on with eager expectancy. Jake came right ahead on a run, and when he was within twenty feet of the boy he let go his lariat.

But it would have been next to an impossibility for him to rope Young Wild West, especially when the boy was looking.

A quick leap to the left and the rope fell upon the ground.

"You made a miss, Potts," Wild said, in his cool and easy way. "Now look out for yourself."

Then the young deadshot made an extra swing, and his lariat went whizzing through the air.

But it did not go very far from him, for suddenly the boy began moving his hand rapidly around over his head.

The rope spun around in a coil, the noose spreading and shutting as it did so.

Potts stepped back a little and proceeded to coil his rope, so he could hurry and be ready for another throw.

But he suddenly looked over his head and saw the rope spinning around in a wide circle right above him.

He ducked his head and started to run to get from beneath it, and Wild gave a sudden jerk and down came the big noose, encircling his body completely.

A quick jerk, and Jake Potts was rolling upon the ground.

"That's one for me," Wild called out, as he ran forward and released him. "I reckon we had better make it two out of three, since I did it so easily this time."

"You're a kind of a wizard with a rope, kid," Potts said, with a shrug of the shoulders, after he had risen to his feet. "You made the blamed thing foller me, no matter which way I turned, and when you got ready you jest let it down on me an' had me dead to rights."

"You can do the same thing, I suppose. You made a miss of it the first time. This time I'll give you a good chance. Now get back there and get your rope in right shape."

"Boys," Potts called out, as he turned to his companions who were standing near at hand, "I reckon there ain't no use in me goin' any further with this kind of a game. I'm putty good at ropin' cattle, an' all that, but when it comes to ropin' a lively kid what's got a rope himself ready to rope me, I don't think I cut much of a figure."

"Try it ag'in, Jake," they called out. "You seen how he done it. Jest give it to him in the same way."

"All right," Potts answered, reluctantly. "If you want it that way I'll have another try."

Then he went back to the little knoll again and got his rope in readiness, Wild waiting where he had stopped.

But the boy was coiling his lariat just the same, for he meant to give the rascally cowboy a worse dose the next time.

"Are you ready?" Potts called out, after a couple of minutes had passed.

"Yes, come right on. I'll stand right here and won't move an inch. How will that suit you?"

Jake came forward on a run again.

But when he was within fifty feet of the boy he let it go with a whirl, and tried to imitate what the boy had done a short time before.

He could swing the rope around in a circle, all right, and make it give all sorts of curves.

But as he kept coming nearer he found that it was getting a little the best of him, and the first thing he knew the rope became twisted, and then before he could disentangle it down upon the ground it came.

The very moment this happened the lariat left Wild's hands, and with one swing the noose dropped over the head and shoulders of Potts.

The necessary jerk was given, and then Young Wild West threw the rope over his shoulders and started on a run for the hotel.

Only one thing could happen, and that was that Jake Potts should fall to the ground and suffer himself to be dragged along.

He yelled to be released, but the boy paid no attention to him, and not until he had him within a few feet of the barroom did he let up.

"There you are, Potts," he said, as he coolly stepped forward and released him. "I reckon you don't know very much about handling a rope. Now just tell me if you are satisfied, so I can attend to some business I have on hand."

"As far as ropin' is concerned, I'm satisfied, Young Wild West," the man answered, as he arose and brushed the dirt from his clothes. "But jest 'cause you have made a fool of me this mornin' only makes me feel all the more sore ag'in you. I ain't sayin' what I'm going to do, but you had better look out for me."

"That is a threat, Potts, but I don't care. You are nothing but a big bluffer, anyhow."

"You're sayin' that 'cause you know you have got the crowd with you. I ain't meanin' that I'd shoot, or anything like that. But I reckon if I was to git my hands on you once you would know somethin'."

"All right, Jake Potts, I am going to give you the chance to put your hands on me."

Then as quick as a flash the boy leaped for him, not raising a hand any more than to guard himself in case a blow was delivered.

But Potts did not offer to strike a blow.

He was so astounded that he stepped back a couple of paces.

Then when he found the boy was following him up he flew in a rage and reached out to grab him.

But Wild ducked down and dove between the cowboy's legs, rising as he did so and throwing him heels over head to the ground.

"Lick him, Jake, lick him!" came from one of the Big Notch Outfit. "He's makin' a monkey out of you. You're big enough to clean him up in no time. Let him have one of them old-time cracks of yours, an' I'll bet you the prints of your knuckles will be on his face for a month."

Up jumped the defeated cowboy.

He was fairly bristling with anger now, and seemed to have lost all control of himself.

He made a move as if to pull his gun, but changed his mind quickly, and then doubling up his fists, leaped straight at the boy, who was dancing in a tantalizing manner right before him.

It had come to a fight now, and that just suited the young deadshot, for he knew that the man would be very easy to handle.

Potts made a vicious swing and missed.

Then Wild's fist caught him under the jaw bone, and down the fellow went in a heap, unconscious.

"Gentlemen, I reckon that will be about all," the young deadshot called out, in his cool and easy way. "Come on, boys. We'll go and get ready for the ride down to Rough-and-Ready Ranch."

As they turned to walk away they kept an eye on the friends of Jake Potts.

But none of them did anything more than to hurry to the assistance of the fallen man, so it was hardly necessary.

Before they got to the blacksmith shop they saw the girls standing there with Millie Rogers.

They had been witnesses to all that had occurred, and their faces were wreathed with smiles.

"I never saw anything like it!" the blacksmith's daughter exclaimed, clapping her hands. "My! how you did dispose of that big fellow."

"That's because he's too clumsy," Wild answered, smilingly. "He's big enough and strong enough to eat me, but when it comes to quickness, he isn't there. But it's all right. I am glad nothing worse happened. He certainly don't know how to handle a rope, and as for fighting, he hasn't the least idea of how to do it, though, of course, if he were to get hold of me, he might get the best of me for a few seconds. But I would turn the tables in short order, and you can bet on it."

At that moment the Rev. Percival Parks came out of the house he was stopping at and hurried to join them.

When greetings had been exchanged he asked what had been going on.

"I heard a loud report while I was still in my room. It awakened me, of course. But when I was informed by the lady of the house that there seemed to be nothing more than a little fun going on over at the front of the hotel, I didn't look any further. But I happened to look out as I was about to sit down to my breakfast, and saw you coming here, so I decided to come out and see you."

"That's all right, Mr. Parks," Wild answered, smilingly. "We had a little duel out there, and it was followed by a brief fight. But it amounted to nothing, after all."

The clergyman wanted to know all about it, so Charlie hastened to explain what had happened.

Wild and Jim let him go ahead and do the talking, and the minister laughed after learning that nothing more than a knock-down blow had been delivered.

Hop came along, and Wild told him to hurry and help his brother load the pack-horses.

"You see, dominie," he said to the sky pilot, "there is really nothing to keep us here, and since we have accepted the invitation to stop at Rough-and-Ready Ranch until after the wedding reception has taken place, we might as well go on down there now."

"Good!" was the reply. "I'll be down to see you to-morrow afternoon."

Then he shook hands with all of them and returned to the house, while Wild and his friends went straight to the camp.

Half an hour later they were all in the saddle and riding away from the settlement.

They were barely out of sight of it when they saw a number of horsemen riding after them.

"Hello!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed, after taking a good look at them. "Here comes some of the Big Notch Outfit. That's Jake Potts an' his men. Most likely they're lookin' for trouble, Wild."

"Probably so," the boy answered, coolly. "They may think that we have no one to help us, and that they can easily

get the best of us. All right. We'll let the girls and the two Chinamen ride on ahead, and then we'll mighty soon find out what these fellows want."

He gave the necessary orders, and Arietta, Anna and Eloise started off at a faster pace, while Hop and Wing urged the pack-horses in order to keep up with them.

Wild, Charlie and Jim brought their horses down to a walk, and then it did not take the cowboys long to come up to them.

"Leaving the Flat, eh, Young Wild West?" one of the cowboys asked, as he reined in his horse and looked sharply at the boy.

"Yes. We are going down this way," was the reply. "Where are you fellows going?"

"We're goin' over to our ranch. The trail branches off about a mile below here that we've got to take."

"Oh, I see. I thought probably you were riding after us to get revenge for what I did to Potts."

"You thought putty nigh right, Young Wild West," Potts answered, a savage gleam in his eyes.

Then he quickly pulled his gun and leveled it straight at the boy.

Crack!

A sharp report rang out, and Potts' gun went flying from his hand.

It was Jim Dart who had fired, for the moment he saw the flash in the eyes of the leader of the gang he had pulled his gun.

"Much obliged, Jim," Wild said, with a smile. "It looked as though he had me, didn't it?"

Of course Charlie was ready for business now.

He had a gun in each hand, and was ready to use them, too.

The rascally cowboys were astounded, for the fact was that none of them had expected their leader was going to try and shoot Young Wild West, even though he had suggested that they ride after them.

"Jake," the young deadshot said, as he forced his horse up close to the villain, "you meant to take my life just then, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't," was the reply. "I jest wanted to have the satisfaction of gittin' the drop on you."

"You lie, Jake. If it hadn't been for one of my partners you would have sent a bullet at me. I hardly believe you would have hit me, though, because you were going to shoot mighty quick, and you had no chance to take anything like an aim."

"I wasn't goin' to shoot," declared Potts, doggedly.

"All right, we'll let it go at that, then. But I am going to tell you one thing. The next time we meet you had better look out for yourself. I would hate to have to shoot you, but I am quite sure that you'll shoot me if you get the chance, so I'll tell you again to look out. Now then, just show us how fast that nag of yours can go. Strike out to the left, and be quick about it."

Potts looked around as if he would like to know how his friends felt about it, and then he turned his horse and promptly started off at a gallop.

The rest went along, too, right after him, and when they were about a hundred yards distant, Young Wild West unslung his Winchester and throwing the butt to his shoulder, began shooting rapidly.

At each report a hat was hit. Three of them were knocked from the heads of the riders, but they had no time to stop and pick them up.

Riding like mad, they continued on, and then with a laugh the young deadshot turned to his partners and said:

"Come on, boys. For the most part they are harmless fellows, though I'll admit that I have got to look out for Jake Potts."

CHAPTER VI.

A GENUINE SURPRISE.

The young deadshot and his friends were not a great while in coming in sight of the buildings that belonged to Rough-and-Ready Ranch.

Before they got to the house two horsemen came riding swiftly to meet them.

"Et," Wild said, as he looked at his sweetheart and smiled. "Ruff and Reddy are coming. They are the owners of the ranch."

"An appropriate name for it, Wild," the girl answered. "Somewhat of a novelty, I should call it."

"Yes, that's right. But I reckon they're both pretty good

fellows. Ruff is, anyway, and from what little I have seen of Reddy Blake, he is just the same. I reckon we'll have quite a little time while we stay here."

"More fun than excitement, perhaps, Wild."

"That's all right, little girl. Fun is a good thing to mix up with excitement and adventure, you know."

The two ranchmen were not long in riding up.

Both of them were delighted, and the way they shook hands and talked was more than enough to convince every one in the party that they were indeed welcome at Rough-and-Ready Ranch.

"Me an' Reddy had a little business out on the range this mornin', but we allowed that we was goin' to wait a couple of hours or so an' see if you would come," Tom Ruff declared, after he had finished greeting them. "We was watchin', so we jest got on our horses an' come out here as quick as chained lightnin'. Come right on to the house. The folks is expectin' you, an' you kin bet that you'll find as good a welcome as you have had in all your lives. We've got a putty good house to live in. You kin see that it's bigger than the general run of ranch houses. But there bein' two families of us, it's necessary. My family ain't very big, 'cause there's only me an' my mother. But Reddy has got a wife an' four little kids. Of course he has to have the biggest part of the house."

"That's all right," Reddy Blake spoke up. "I reckon there will be plenty of room for Young Wild West an' his crowd. Them kids of mine kin bunk in one room, an' they'll be mighty glad to do it, as long as we've got guests here. Come right on an' let's introduce 'em to the women folks."

As they rode up to the house the "women folks," as he called them, appeared.

Tom Ruff's mother was a comely-looking woman of perhaps fifty, while Reddy Blake's wife was considerably younger, and had a flaming head of red hair.

As Reddy himself had that color hair, it was not surprising that when the four children showed themselves they should have the same.

"Sorter looks as if a fire might start here at any time, don't it?" Ruff said, laughingly.

"Great gimlets!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed. "You have got that about right, pard. That's the first red-headed family I've ever seen. Why, every blamed one of 'em is that way."

There was a burst of laughter at this, for it seemed that both Reddy and his wife were proud of having that kind of hair.

"What do you think about it, heathen?" Cheyenne Charlie said, as he turned his horse and rode over to the side of the clever Chinee.

"Velly muchee stlange, Misler Charlie," the Chinaman answered, a broad grin on his face. "Lis allee samee Lough-and-Leddy Lanch, so be."

"Yes, that's right, an' them what owns it is named Ruff an' Reddy, though Anna says it's spelled in a different way."

"Lat makee no diffelence, Misler Charlie. Allee samee Luff and Leddy. Lillee kids with plenty led hair. Nicee Melican woman with led hair, and Misler Blake, he allee light. Hip hi, hoolay!"

The Chinaman uttered a shout and waved his hat, and then nearly every one joined in, though they did not know exactly what they were cheering for.

The two women were the exact types of the old-time residents of that part of the country, and the way they greeted the girls and escorted them into the house was all that could be wished for, for Arietta had been born and bred in the West, and Anna and Eloise had been there long enough to become accustomed to the way of the people, so if there had been any other sort of greeting they might have felt a little bashful.

The result was that in less than ten minutes they were acting just as if they had known the Ruffs and the "Reddys" a long time.

"I reckon them two heathens will have to put up in the bunk-house with the boys," Blake said, after the girls had gone into the house. "I'm sure none of the boys will object to it, 'cause even though they're putty rough an' always ready for anything what's going', they're a good-natured lot."

"An' some of 'em is boss ropers we heard last night," Charlie said, looking sharply at the ranchman.

"About the best anywhere around these parts, I reckon. Why, our men is generally called the Ropers of Rough-and-Ready Ranch. They won prizes at the fair what was held at Springville last fall. Beat out every cowboy what come along in ropin' cattle. But," he added, "there ain't nothin' strange about it, I s'pose, 'cause they're at it all the time

when they ain't got nothin' else to do. I'll git 'em to show you somethin' this afternoon, though of course I ain't allowin' that they kin teach you fellers much."

"We ain't s'posed to be ropers, Boss Reddy," Charlie declared, and then he winked at Hop, who for some reason had kept close to him.

"Lat light, Misler Charlie," the Chinaman said, as if he felt it his duty to bear out the scout in what he said. "Misler Wild havee lillee lopee duel lis morning."

"What does he say?" Reddy Blake asked, turning to the scout.

"He says Wild had a rope duel this mornin'."

"A rope duel! What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you know the little difference that Wild had with that galoot belongin' to the Big Notch Outfit last night."

"Oh, yes. Did they settle it this mornin'?"

"I reckon they did. Got out in front of the hotel an' tried to rope each other. Wild fixed him up in no time, an' dragged him about a hundred feet over the rough ground, an' then Potts wanted to fight, an' Wild knocked him silly with one crack."

Having started to tell it, Charlie did not stop until he related what had happened while they were on their way to the ranch.

"A bad bunch," Reddy Blake declared, looking very serious. "So Jake Potts tried to drop Young Wild West, did he? Nothin' surprisin' about that. He's a bad egg, anyhow, an' you had better tell the boy to keep his eyes open, or he'll pop him over some time when he ain't lookin'."

"I reckon we'll take care of Jake Potts, all right, Reddy."

"Oh, I s'pose you will. You fellers know your business. You have been through the mill lots of times, so I've heard tell, an' it don't appear to be necessary for a feller like me to give any advice."

He then proceeded to show them where to put their horses and their camping outfit.

His partner had remained at the house, probably for the purpose of assisting his mother to entertain the girls.

"I s'pose Tom told you that he was goin' to be married to the blacksmith's daughter," the ranchman ventured, grinning broadly.

"Yes," answered Wild, "he told us about that yesterday. We expect to remain here until after the wedding reception."

"That's Wednesday night."

"Yes, we know that."

"But you're goin' to stay a heap longer than that, though, ain't you?"

"I hardly think so. We are in the habit of keeping on the move unless there is something going on that interests us. The chances are it will be rather quiet here at the ranch."

"Quiet, eh? Well, I s'pose so, unless it happens that a row starts between our boys an' the Big Notch Outfit. There's bad blood between 'em, you know. I reckon there would have been a fight last night at the Slipper Flat Hotel if we hadn't outnumbered 'em. Then ag'in, it's more than likely that Jake Potts will be after you, an' he's putty sartin to bring his whole gang with him, 'cause I happen to know that he's putty much of a coward."

"I know that pretty well, too, Mr. Blake."

"See here," and Blake grew very earnest, "don't call me that. I'm Reddy, an' that name is good enough for me."

"Very well, Reddy, let it go at that, then. I'm quite sure that we'll be able to make out all right, even if things are a little dull here."

"They won't be dull here Wednesday, 'cause there's goin' to be a general holiday. The ropers is goin' to have a rousin' old time to celebrate the hitchin' up of Tom Ruff an' the blacksmith's gal. I sorter reckon you'll find enough to keep you goin' that day, even if it is a little dull to-day an' to-morrow."

"Oh, a little rest will do us good, anyhow," and Wild turned and walked away from the corral where the horses had been turned in.

Charlie and Jim had attended to their part of it, and they quickly hurried to the spot, leaving Hop and Wing to store the camping outfit and supplies in the barn.

Then the four proceeded directly to the house, where they found the girls making themselves thoroughly at home.

"Glad you have come. Did you git everything fixed up all right?" Tom Ruff asked, as they entered the sitting-room on his side of the house.

"I reckon so, Mr. Ruff," the young deadshot answered, smilingly. "We left our two heathens to finish the job."

They are putting away our belongings, so they will be ready for us when we leave here."

"That's all right. Any of the boys down there to help e'm?"

"There ain't no one around jest now, Tom," Reddy answered, with a shake of the head. "I'm expectin' the most of the men in afore noon, an' some of 'em oughter to be here now. But I reckon them two heathens don't need no help. I watched 'em a little bit, an' seen how they went at things. Looked as if they know jest what they've got to do."

"No two could do it any better than Hop and Wing," Jim Dart declared. "They have a system of their own, and it's the same way when they put up our tents or take them down. They can beat any one I ever saw at such work."

"That's 'cause they've done it 'so many times," Charlie spoke up, as if he did not think it worth while boasting about what the Chinamen could do."

"One of them heathens is the smartest an' funniest feller I ever met," Reddy declared. "But what you said he done this mornin' does beat all. Woke up the Big Notch Outfit when they was sound asleep in the hotel barroom, an' done it by settin' off a firecracker. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom," the ranchman's mother said, as she stepped over and touched him on the arm, "you will have to invite that funny Chinaman into the house to-night. The girls have said as much as if he was a very good entertainer. He is a magician, and can do all sorts of queer and amazing things."

"We'll have the pair of 'em in here, mother," the young man answered. "Any heathens as is good enough to travel with Young Wild West an' his friends is good enough to come in our house."

"It won't do no good to git Wing in the house," Charlie spoke up, with a shake of the head. "There ain't no fun in him any more. Afore Hop joined our party he was somewhat of a funny heathen, but he mighty soon found out that he couldn't hold a candle to his brother, so he settled down till he's become what might be called a blamed sleepy heathen. When he ain't got nothin' to do he jest likes to doze or sleep."

"Maybe he smokes opium," suggested Reddy, who seemed to know something of the habits of the Chinese.

"No, he don't," declared the scout. "Never had a bit of that stuff since he's been with us, an' I'll swear to it. I know somewhat about opium myself. We was in 'Frisco once, an' we had a chance to see a lot of what was goin' on in the Chinese quarter, as they call it. That place is about as rotten as any I've ever seen, an' I sartinly have seen a whole lot. Them heathens is said to be gittin' converted to our ways right along; but I don't believe it. There's Hop an' Wing. If they was to go back to China they would be jest the same as they was afore they come here, though maybe they would know a heap more than they did afore."

Charlie might have kept on talking in this strain for a long time if Reddy's wife had not come in with her youngest child in her arms and invited them to inspect her side of the house.

All did as she requested, and when they found how neat she had things they easily imagined that she was very thrifty, for with the care of the four children and the other work to do she certainly had to keep on the move all the time.

When Arietta spoke of this the woman smiled and said:

"Oh, I couldn't be satisfied if I wasn't doing something all the time. But I have a squaw to help me. She's very handy, and don't mind the hard work."

All this sort of thing was not very interesting to Wild and his partners.

But they had come to pay a visit at the ranch, and they felt duty-bound to listen and talk as well, no matter what the conversation might be.

But the girls were certainly more than pleased to be at the ranch, and finally when they got with the two women and began chatting as if there was no one else present, Charlie winked at the rest and then put on his hat and went outside.

"Sorter tiresome, ain't it?" Reddy said, with a grin, as they all came out. "Women folks is worse than a lot of poll-parrots when they git goin'. But let 'em talk, if it does 'em any good, an' I'm sure it does, too, 'cause my wife seems to be happier than she's been in six weeks, an' that's sayin' a whole lot, 'cause it ain't very often that she ain't got a smile on her face."

Naturally the two ranchmen had a desire to show them about the place.

This would not be new to them, but it was a sort of change, so Wild, Charlie and Jim went the rounds with them and took

in all that was to be seen, from the hogs and chickens to the horses and cattle that were within easy distance of the house.

Certainly it was a well kept ranch, but they had noticed that much right after getting a view of the buildings.

"How long have you two fellows been running the ranch?" Wild asked Tom Ruff, as they were walking toward the building that was used as a sleeping quarters by the cowboys.

"Three years now," was the reply. "My father an' Reddy's brother located here first, an' when they died within six months of each other it was sorter natural that me an' Reddy should go into partnership. We had always been somewhat like chums, though he's four or five years older than I am."

"It don't make a heap of difference," Reddy said, with a laugh.

"Not one bit of difference," his partner declared. "We've been pards afore we got into a money partnership, an' I reckon there ain't never goin' to be any quarrelin' done by us. We're makin' a little money now, an' in another year we'll have our property clear of debt."

"Where's them two heathens?" Reddy asked, as he looked over at the barn, where he had last seen Hop and Wing.

The door was closed, and this was enough to convince him that they had stored away the things they had taken from the pack-horses.

"Most likely one of 'em is lookin' around to find a chance to do somethin' funny, an' the other one is asleep," Charlie answered. "We'll go to that barn an' see."

He led the way to the barn, but found the door locked.

"I give the one you call Hop the key, 'cause I wanted to make sure that nobody bothered with your things," Reddy explained. "They can't be in there; leastwise in that part of the barn."

"We'll go an' look in the bunk-house," Ruff suggested, so they all turned their steps that way.

But before they could go inside three cowboys were seen riding toward the spot.

"Some of the boys is comin' back, Tom," Reddy said. "They've been out all night, an' I reckon they've got the steers drove putty well over toward the Sparse Timber. We allowed that they was goin' to git things all straightened out afore they come back. If we find everything is all right we won't have to go out there, an' kin stay right here an' make things interestin' for our guests."

"That's right," his partner answered, nodding his head approvingly.

The three cowboys soon rode up and dismounted.

Then they quickly informed the two ranchmen that everything was in fine shape out on the range, and that it would not be at all necessary for them to go out that morning.

They said the rest of the men they had been working with would be in a little later, and then after being introduced to Young Wild West and his partners, whom they greeted warmly, they turned to go into the bunk-house, presumably to fix themselves up a little, since they had been informed that there were ladies visiting at the ranch.

The first one to enter the place came out in a hurry, nearly upsetting the other two.

"Thunder!" he cried, excitedly. "Jest look inside. There's some one there."

The face of Cheyenne Charlie lighted up instantly, and before any of the rest could hardly make a move, he leaped to the door and peered in.

Sitting upon a stool in about the center of the room was a human figure, or what seemed to be such, for there were head and shoulders to it, and something that looked like a face.

But it was a hideous face, if not a comical one, and Charlie knew right away that Hop was up to his old tricks.

"Say, Wild!" he called out. "that fool of a heathen is tryin' to play a joke. Come here an' look."

CHAPTER VII.

SOME OF HOP'S NONSENSE.

The two Chinamen were not long in finishing the task allotted to them, and when everything had been placed so it could easily be found when they wanted it, Wing gave a yawn and stretched his arms, while Hop walked to the door of the barn and looked out over the broad stretch of grassland that lay before him.

There being no one about, he did not know what to do with himself, since he had heard it said that he and Hop were to take up their quarters in the bunk-house.

The clever Chinnee remained standing in the doorway of the barn for fully three minutes.

Then he turned and saw his brother in the act of lying down upon some hay.

Instantly a grin came over his face.

It was a sort of room to the big barn where they had been told to put the camping outfit and supplies, and a narrow door which was partly open led to another part of it.

It occurred to Hop that he might have a little fun at his brother's expense, so he waited a few minutes, and then hearing Wing snoring away in regular fashion, he stepped over to the door and opening it passed through.

There was a hasp and staple at the other side, so without any delay he closed the door and fastened it so it could not be opened by Wing in case he tried to do so.

Then the clever Chinnee passed on through and came outside by means of another door, after which he returned and looked in at his sleeping brother.

"Evelythling allee light. Nobody stealee um thlings, and nobody stealee my fool blother. Me lockee um door. Misler Leddy allee samee givee me um key."

He closed the big door gently, and quickly locked it, placing the key in his pocket.

Then he laughed softly to himself as he thought of how his brother would act when he awoke and found that he was locked in the barn.

But that would be some time later, for it was hardly likely Wing would awaken before dinner-time.

Hop now turned his footsteps toward the bunk-house.

"Me wantee see where me sleepee to-night, so be," he muttered. "Velly nicee place, so be. Me likee um lanch velly muchee."

Inside he went, and after inspecting the bunks and everything else that was to be seen, he sat down on a stool and tried to think of something he could do to make a little fun and thus relieve the monotony of his surroundings.

Rising from the stool, he went out of the bunk-house and into a sort of shed that adjoined it.

Here he found farming implements and all sorts of things that had been stored so they might be used when needed.

On a shelf were several paint cans, and in a pot of oil was some brushes.

Hop's face lighted up when he saw the paint, and he began examining the cans.

"Led, black, blue and yellee," he said, nodding his head as if pleased. "Me havee paintee lillee bit, so be."

He wanted to paint something, but could not think of what it should be, so he looked around again.

Presently his eyes fell upon a big gourd which was dry and hard and about the size of a man's head and very much the shape of it.

"Me knowee whatee me do!" he exclaimed. "Me fixee uppee velly nicee man, so be."

The Chinaman was nothing if not artistic in a way, and in less than ten minutes he had painted the gourd in a pretty good imitation of the face that one might suppose to see upon a Chinese idol.

Having done this, he took a look outside, and was just in time to see the two ranchmen escorting Young Wild West and his partners toward the corral, which was a short distance from the barn.

Hop waited until he was sure they would not look back and see him, and then he slipped around and entered the bunk-house.

There were plenty of blankets and other things there that would aid him to make the dummy of a man, and knowing just how to go at it, the Chinaman was not long in getting busy.

Placing the stool in the center of the room, he built up from it by means of a couple of sticks and a broom, and soon had the gourd placed at about the height a man's head would be if he were sitting upon the stool.

Then it was easy for him to find an old shirt and coat, so in a very short time he had rigged up his dummy.

"Velly nicee lookee man, so be," he muttered, as he nodded in a pleased way. "Now len, me go outtee and waittee till somebody comee."

He was just about to go outside when he saw Wild and his partners coming straight for the bunk-house with the two ranchmen.

But that made no difference to Hop.

He slipped back quietly, and finding a good hiding-place in the corner, crouched and waited.

He heard the three cowboys as they rode up, and he laughed softly to himself, for he knew very well that if Wild and his

partners happened to enter the place with Ruff and Reddy there would not be very much fun about it, since they would quickly knock the dummy over.

Things went just the way the Chinaman wanted them, and when he heard the cowboys as they came in he peered from his hiding-place and watched.

The look upon the man's face who first saw the dummy was enough to pay Hop for the trouble he had taken, and he was compelled to hold a hand over his mouth to keep from laughing audibly.

But when he heard Cheyenne Charlie tell Wild about it he did not feel so pleased.

However, he remained right where he was, and then in came all hands, the cowboy who had first entered the place being the last.

"What in thunder does this mean, anyhow?" Reddy asked, as he turned to the scout, a puzzled look on his face. "Do you s'pose that's the heathen you call Hop?"

"Most likely," Charlie answered. "But jest let him alone. Sometimes he's got a way of settin' right still afore he does a wonderful trick."

"That's the funniest painted face I ever seen," Reddy declared, with a shake of the head. "How will the heathen ever git it off?"

It happened just then that a stick which was holding the dummy in position slipped a little and caused the object to move.

This made them all think that it really was Hop in a hideous disguise.

"What are you trying to do, Hop?" Wild demanded, as he took a step toward the object.

There was no reply.

"This is nothing very funny," the young deadshot went on. "You didn't suppose you would scare anybody by rigging yourself up in this fashion, did you?"

"No, Misler Wild."

The reply seemed to come from the dummy, all right, though there was no movement of the painted lips.

But this was not strange, since Hop was quite a clever ventriloquist, and thinking it necessary for him to answer, he had done so, throwing his voice as well as he could to the object that was mistaken for himself.

But Wild quickly took a tumble, as the saying goes.

He was now close enough to see that it was not a human face that was painted, for he could see just what it was, since there was no hair upon it at all, and the ears were so crude that it was really ridiculous.

"Reddy," he said, turning to the ranchman, "I wonder if I could put a bullet through the heathen's head? I don't like to see him doing things like this, and it's about time he was planted, anyhow."

"No shootee me, Misler Wild," seemed to come from the dummy, though it did not move a particle. "You no killee me, anyhow. Me velly smartee Chinnee. If you killee me me comee to life velly muchee quickee, so be."

"That's the blamedest talkin' heathen I ever seen," declared one of the cowboys, for he was thoroughly puzzled.

"Never seen anybody who could set so blamed still as all that," one of the others declared.

"An' he talks without movin' his lips," said the third.

"Me velly smartee Chinnee."

Wild knew exactly where the heathen was hiding, for he had listened carefully.

But Hop took pains to show him, anyhow, for as the boy looked toward the corner he half arose and made a motion with his hand.

"Here she goes. I'm going to put an end to you, heathen," the young deadshot said, suddenly.

Then he pulled his gun, and taking a quick aim, fired.

As the report rang out a shrill yell sounded throughout the bunk-house.

But the gourd, having been placed upon a stout stick, merely moved.

However, there was a hole right between the painted eyes, as all could see.

"Boys, just take a look and see if I hit him," Wild said, as he turned from the dummy and walked over to where Hop was hiding.

Ruff and Reddy, the two ranchmen, walked over and quickly discovered that the supposed face was merely a dry gourd.

"Why, it ain't no heathen, after all," the former declared, looking amazed.

"I knew it, Tom," the young deadshot called out, laughingly. "You certainly didn't think I would shoot the Chinaman, did you?"

"I was mighty surprised when you done it, I will say."

"Well, here's the guilty heathen now," and so saying Wild reached over, and seizing Hop by the queue, dragged him forth.

"Of all the simple things I ever heard tell of him doin' this is the worst!" Cheyenne Charlie declared, in disgust, for as sharp as he was, and being so used to the tricks of the heathen, he had been totally deceived.

Jim had been, too, for that matter, but he happened to be looking in the right way when Hop showed himself to Wild.

But of course he knew that Wild would not shoot, unless he knew for a certainty that no harm would be done.

The scout became angry, probably because he had been deceived.

"Fetch him here, Wild," he called out, as he started to make a grab for the struggling Chinaman.

"Hold on, Charlie," was the quick reply. "I have got him by the pigtail, and I reckon I'll take care of him. I agree with you when you say it was a very nonsensical thing for him to do."

"Stoppee, Misler Wild, stoppee!" cried Hop.

But the young deadshot kept right on, and quickly landed him outside the bunk-house.

The two ranchmen and the cowboys were now grinning broadly.

They seemed to understand that it was a joke, but they could not realize exactly what it was about.

Charlie now turned his attention to the dummy, and picking it up, gourd and all, hastened outside with it.

"That's my shirt!" one of the cowboys exclaimed, as the thing fell apart.

"An' that's the big gourd I brought up from Dry Creek a couple of months ago!" Reddy exclaimed. "Got a hole plumb through it now. But it's all right, 'cause I only saved it for the seeds, anyhow."

After he had pulled the Chinaman about for a minute or two Wild let go the dangling queue and said:

"Now then, Hop, explain yourself. What kind of a joke do you call this, anyhow?"

"Me no knowee, Misler Wild. Me wantee do somethin', and me findee plenty paint and len me fixee uppee um man. Me thlinkee maybe um cowboys be velly muchee scared when ley comee."

"Huh!" exclaimed Charlie, disgustedly. "A ten-year-old kid could play a better trick than that. See here, heathen, if you don't do somethin' a whole lot better than this here thing what you have done now before bedtime to-night, you're likely to lose a couple of inches of that pigtail. You hear what I say! I'm meanin' business."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie. Me fixee uppe, so be. Me velly smartee Chinee."

The cowboys picked up the articles Hop had used to make the dummy, and laughingly took them back into the bunk-house.

Then Reddy took the gourd and placed it where Hop had found it, and after looking at the paint pots, he was satisfied that the Chinaman had told the truth, even if what he had seen had not already convinced him.

"Well, what are we goin' to do now?" Tom Ruff said, as he looked toward the house as if he was undecided whether to go there or not.

"S'pose we go ahead an' kill the hog now instead of waitin' till this afternobl," Reddy suggested. "We want some fresh pork for Wednesday, you know."

"That's jest the thing!" Cheyenne Charlie exclaimed. "Anythin' to keep things goin'."

"Boys," Ruff said, turning to the cowboys, "come on an' lend us a hand. Reddy will do the butcherin'. I'll go in the house an' git my Remington, an' the blamed hog will soon be fixed."

Ruff ran quickly to the house, and in a very short time returned with a rifle.

Then all hands made their way to the inclosure in which the hogs were kept.

The one that was to be slaughtered was quickly singled out and driven away from the rest.

Then Ruff quickly fired a shot and dropped the hog in a jiffy, after which Reddy jumped in and with his hunting knife cut the animal's throat so it could bleed properly.

Butchering hogs was not exactly a pleasant pastime, but such things had to be done, and not having been present at such a scene in some little time, the young deadshot and his partners were not a little interested.

It was the same with Hop.

"My fool blother likee see lis. Me no knowee where he is," he said, turning to Charlie.

"I reckon he don't have to see what's goin' on," was the reply.

"Maybe he sleepee in um barn, Misler Charlie."

"Maybe he is. If you want him here you kin call him."

"Allee light, Misler Charlie. Me say you wantee my blother."

Then the heathen hurried to the barn, and pounding upon the door, called out loudly to the effect that Cheyenne Charlie wanted Wing immediately.

When he heard him stirring about inside he turned and retraced his steps, and then it was that Wing discovered that he was a prisoner.

But there was so much noise and excitement about the hog-pen that the cries Wing uttered were not heard until the hog was nearly dressed.

Then one of the cowboys in going for a pail of water happened to hear him.

Finding the barn locked, he went in by the other way and released him, and then Wing came out with blood in his eye, for he knew very well that Hop had played a trick upon him.

When the scout saw him coming he turned to the ranchmen and cowboys and said:

"Now look out for some fun. Them two heathens is goin' to have a fight!"

CHAPTER VIII.

READY FOR THE KNOT TO BE TIED.

Cheyenne Charlie was never better pleased than when he was able to witness a fight between Hop and Wing.

Of course it never was much of a fight when it occurred, since neither of them knew the least bit about the art of boxing.

But it was fun for him, just the same, and now he was anticipating something that would be worth seeing.

But Young Wild West did not feel that way about it.

He knew the two heathens would surely come together if nothing prevented them.

"Kin they fight?" Blake asked, grinning broadly, as he looked at the scout.

"Jest wait and see."

Wing came rushing to the spot, Hop standing his ground, his fists doubled as if he really meant to show how much he knew about the art of self-defense.

"Me smackee you facee, Hop!" the cook exclaimed, his eyes flashing fire. "Lookie outtee, my fool blother. Me allee samee makee you nose bleed velly muchee quick, so be. Me fightee allee samee likee Melican man."

The two ranchmen and the cowboys at once formed a ring about the two.

Wild hesitated about stopping the trouble before it really began.

But when he saw how eager Ruff and Reddy were he decided to let it go for a minute or two.

"Heathens," he called out, sharply, "if you want to fight, go ahead. But don't hurt each other."

"Not much fear of that," Jim Dart spoke up, with a laugh.

The two Celestials stood glaring at each other, neither of them very anxious to strike a blow.

"You heard what I said," Wild called out, as he took a step toward them. "Go ahead and fight."

"Allee light, Misler Wild," came from the two almost as if it was spoken in one voice.

Then both struck out and missed.

But they came together, and it was natural that they should grapple and start a sort of wrestling match.

"Go it, Hop!" Reddy called out, for he seemed to favor the clever Chinees.

"Give it to him, you other feller," Ruff shouted, as he ran forward and gave Wing a push.

This had the effect of causing Hop to stagger backward, and the result was that both went to the ground.

Then they rolled over two or three times, and Wing managed to get on top.

He at once started to slap Hop's face with the flat of his hand, and some of the blows were pretty good ones.

But Hop suddenly threw up his knees and sent his brother over his head.

Then he got up and pounced upon him with wonderful quickness.

"Hold on a minute," Wild called out, sternly. "Let him get up, Hop. No more of this fooling. I want it to be a fair stand-up fight."

Wing got upon his feet, and without waiting a moment lowered his head and butted Hop in the stomach.

"Hip hi!" the clever Chinese shouted, as he doubled up like a half-opened jack-knife and fell to the ground. "You allee samee no fightee fair, my fool blother. Me lickee you velly goodee for lat."

Wing would have pounced upon him and probably have scratched him up pretty well if Wild had not again interfered.

"I reckon we'll call this a draw," he said, as he stepped between them. "Now, Wing, you go on about your business. Hop, you just mind your eye, or you'll wish you had never put up a fight with your brother."

What the young deadshot said was law to the two Chinamen, and reluctantly Wing walked away, while Hop, who had not yet fully recovered his breath from the butt he had received in the stomach, waited a minute or two and then without a word got up and slunk off to the bunk-house.

"I reckon neither of 'em didn't git hurt much," one of the cowboys said, as if he was somewhat disappointed. "I seen a heathen over in Globe once that could fight almost as good as a white man. But them two don't know how to fight."

"If Wild hadn't been here you would have seen a putty hot time of it afore they got through," Charlie said, in a whisper. "But he never likes to have 'em go at it that way, so I s'pose it's all right."

There was really now nothing to interest our friends outside, so they made their way to the house, and waited there until it was dinner-time.

After dinner the girls suggested a ride over the cattle range, so they all mounted their horses and spent the greater part of the afternoon in the open air.

It was very tame, but still they all thought that it would do them considerable good, for surely it was a rest from the strenuous way they were living.

That night Hop was called into the house and he gave a sleight-of-hand performance which lasted fully two hours.

The cowboys were permitted to come inside, and they as well as the two families enjoyed it thoroughly.

The next morning the girls declared that they wanted to post some letters, though it was really an excuse to ride over to the settlement.

Wild and his partners were willing, however, so about nine o'clock they set out and soon reached Slipper Flat.

The letters were posted, and a few trifling things purchased by the girls, and then they went over to the house the sky pilot was stopping at.

He met them at the door, and assured them that he was just about to ride over to Rough-and-Ready Ranch, and would be pleased to accompany them when they went back, if they had no objections.

Of course they had no objections, for the Rev. Percival Parks was a fine man indeed.

Things were very quiet at the settlement.

The hotel-keeper was sitting outside near the door of the barroom, and a couple of loungers were near him.

They all greeted our friends in a friendly way, of course, but no one went inside to patronize the bar.

The ride back to the ranch might have been called a pleasant one, though there was nothing in the way of excitement that occurred.

"I thought I'd better make all the arrangements for the marriage ceremony. You know there are some papers to be filled out," Parks said, as they were nearing the ranch house. "I'll get Mr. Ruff to answer the necessary questions and sign his name, and then I'll see the young lady when I return and let her do the same. I don't know at just what hour they desire the ceremony to be performed, but I have heard that a celebration is to be held here to-morrow night after the knot has been tied."

"They expect to have quite a big time of it, dominie," Wild answered, with a smile. "They are going to start it going in the afternoon. Ruff and Reddy are going to have their cowboy ropers out to give an exhibition just for our benefit, I suppose."

"They are all rough-and-ready fellows, I'm sure," the sky pilot answered, shaking his head. "But I know," he added, after thinking a moment, "that they all have pretty good hearts in them. I have met several so-called bad men, but quite a few of them have shown that they are pretty good, after all. This is a queer world, and it all depends upon whom a person associates with. If his associates are bad he is apt to act that way, and it's just the same on the other hand."

They all agreed with him on this, and when they dismounted in front of the house the two women came out, Mrs. Blake followed by her red-haired children.

Charlie had something to say about the kids, and the clergyman laughed quite heartily after he saw that the ranchman's wife took it good-naturedly.

Ruff was not at home, and it was not until dinner was ready that he arrived.

Then after the clergyman had eaten the noonday meal with the ranchman and his guests, the business he had come there for was quickly transacted.

"Well, Mr. Ruff," Parks said, as he placed the paper back in his pocket, after it had been duly signed, "what time do you want the ceremony to take place? I asked Miss Rogers that question this morning, and she said that she thought it should be at four o'clock. But it was for you to decide."

"If she says four o'clock, four o'clock it will be," Ruff answered, quickly. "Millie is a blamed good gal, an' she oughter have her way about this part of it, anyhow."

"Very well, then, we'll set it down for four o'clock. Will there be many witnesses?"

"Anybody kin see me married as wants to come; that is, if Millie is satisfied."

"I failed to ask her about that."

"All right. I'll see her to-night about it. If she's willin' I'm goin' to have Young Wild West an' Arietta do the standin' up for us. You know there's s'posed to be a best man an' a bridesmaid."

"Yes, that is a rule that is followed quite frequently. I haven't the least doubt that Miss Rogers will agree to it."

"You kin speak to her about it when you go back, dominie; or say, you needn't go back till after supper, an' I'll go with you."

"That will suit me very well, for I can't help feeling a little fear of the so-called bad men who are constantly to be met with in this part of the country. Not that I think they would do me bodily harm, but they are apt to be insulting."

"You needn't be afraid of none of 'em if I'm with you," Ruff declared.

That afternoon Cheyenne Charlie afterward declared to be about the tamest one he had put in in many years.

But they managed to pull through, and after supper-time Ruff and the sky pilot bade them good-night and set out for the settlement.

The next morning Ruff told the young deadshot that he had given it out that there was to be an exhibition of roping at the ranch that afternoon, and that he would arrive with his bride at six o'clock.

"This here business is goin' to be in charge of Reddy, my pard," he added. "Of course I've got other things to look after to-day, you know. I s'pose this is about the greatest day of my life."

"It certainly is, Tom," the young deadshot answered, smilingly. "I'm sorry I won't be here when the roping contest starts."

"That's so. You an' Arietta is goin' to stand up with us. I fixed that all right. Millie was mighty glad to know that you would be willin' to do it."

"Very well. We won't back down. Probably there will be something going on after we get back at six o'clock."

"I reckon we kin git here a little afore that time, come to think of it. I've hired a team an' a good wagon to bring me an' Millie an' the sky pilot down to the house. I s'pose you folks will ride your horses."

"Certainly. That's about the only way we would care to go and come."

"All right, then. I'll tell Reddy to hold off the best part of it until about half-past five. Then you'll have time to git back an' show 'em what you kin do with a rope if you want to."

"I don't want to do anything like that unless there is a general demand for it. I flatter myself that I am pretty good at handling a rope as well as shooting with a rifle or revolver. But it isn't always necessary for a fellow to show what he can do."

"Never mind. That will be all fixed. Reddy knows what he's goin' to do this afternoon, an' I reckon he'll carry it through all right."

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when Tom Ruff left the house with a bundle which contained the new suit of clothes he was to wear after his wedding.

One of the cowboys brought his horse around, and he was followed by Wild, Charlie and Jim, who were leading their own horses as well as those belonging to the girls.

Tom's mother was to go over in a buckboard, and when it was found that the man who had arranged to drive her over

had been called upon the range, there was a slight delay, while the young ranchman did not know exactly what was best to do.

"Say, Tom," Wild said, "why can't you leave your horse here and drive over with your mother? Some one certainly could be found to drive back with her."

"That's all right, but I like to stick to the arrangements what's made," was the reply.

At that moment Hop Wah appeared on the scene, as if he had been waiting for the express purpose of offering his services.

"Me dlive um horse, so be. Me velly smartee Chinec."

"Good!" Tom exclaimed, his face lighting up. "I reckon it's all right now. Go an' git the wagon, an' hurry up. Reddy's got the horse all hitched up."

No one offered any objections, so in a few minutes the Chinaman drove up with the buckboard, and Mrs. Ruff, attired in all the finery she could find among her possessions, got in.

Then with Reddy's wife and the kids waving their hands and Reddy himself and the cowboys shouting good luck to them, the little party set out for the settlement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RETURN OF THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE.

The wedding party, as it might be called, had not been gone more than twenty minutes when a number of horsemen were seen riding toward Rough-and-Ready Ranch.

The horsemen proved to be members of the Big Notch Outfit, which was the nearest ranch to Ruff and Reddy's.

They were out in full force, too, there being fourteen of them, and some of them certainly were very rough-looking fellows.

The foreman of the neighboring ranch was not with the men, so it seemed that Jake Potts had taken his place, for when they rode up and halted before the bunk-house, he promptly put on an air of importance.

"Say, Reddy," he called out, as he dismounted. "my boys wants to know what this thing is goin' to be, anyhow. Is there any prizes to be put up? You fellers call yourselves the champion ropers, but we allow that we've got somethin' in the way of champions among us, too. But what's the use of us ropin' cattle an' sich like if there ain't no chance to win a prize?"

"I ain't heard nothin' about a prize bein' put up, Jake," Reddy answered, somewhat tartly. "About all I know is that a good feed is goin' to be had, an' there's lots to drink here when the proper time comes to put it out. This here business of ropin' cattle to see who's good at it is only to pass the time away. I'm runnin' the thing, an' I made up my mind to let them what wants to git in an' show what they kin do go right ahead. I'll pick out the two what I think is the best, an' then wait till Young Wild West comes along."

"Why, ain't Young Wild West here?" and Potts looked around and showed surprise.

"No, he ain't here. He went over to see Tom git hitched up to the blacksmith's daughter."

"Oh! Funny you didn't invite everybody to the weddin'."

"The weddin' celebration is to be had here, so that shows why, I s'pose. It ain't s'posed that if a couple gits married they've got to let everybody see 'em, is it?"

"I always thought that's the way it was done. But of course you fellers do things different, anyhow. But fetch out some of them drinks. We're as dry as we kin be."

While Reddy did not like the Big Notch Outfit very well, he thought he could hardly refuse to treat them to something to drink.

"Williams," he said, calling to one of the cowboys, "I'll put you in charge of the drinkables. Take these boys in to the mess-house an' give 'em what they want."

"All right," Williams answered. "This way, boys."

Then the visiting cowboys all dismounted and, after tying their horses, made a rush into the mess-house.

Those working for Ruff and Reddy followed them, and for the next ten minutes liquor was flowing quite freely.

But they all seemed to be very good-natured about it, and when Williams told them that he was going to shut it off for a while, they came out, and were then ready to whoop it up.

Jake Potts had not neglected to take a little more than his share of the liquor that was served, and as the fiery stuff coursed through his veins he began to grow quite reckless, while a burning desire to be revenged upon Young Wild West came upon him.

Calling one of his companions he knew he could depend upon as a side, he said in a low tone of voice:

"Now then, Sam, we didn't come over here jest for the fun of it, you know."

"I reckon not, Jake," was the reply. "You have been sayin' right along that you was goin' to git square with Young Wild West for what he done to you the other night."

"Not only the other night, but Monday mornin', too."

"Yes, I know. I don't blame you one bit."

"Well, I reckon we had better start a little shoot-up here when Young Wild West comes back. I'm goin' to see to it that a bullet happens to hit that kid, too. But we've got to make it look as if it's an accident. Now then, it had better be two bullets, so I'm leavin' it to you to take a shot at him when you git the chance."

"All right. I'll do the best I kin, but I ain't goin' to run no risk, Jake. Don't think that."

"I don't want to run none, either. We'll jest yell like anything, an' ride around 'em when they come back. Then we'll blaze away, an' Young Wild West kin easily git popped over without any one knowin' that it's anything else but an accident. That's my game, an' I'm goin' to work it. I'll feel that I've got revenge then."

"Count on me, Jake," the fellow called Sam answered, for he was really a pronounced villain, anyhow, though a bit cowardly.

Reddy Blake knew that at least three hours must be passed away in some kind of fashion, so when some of the settlers arrived and a few cowboys from a ranch that was further away than the Big Notch, he announced that there would be a roping contest, and that the winner of it would meet Young Wild West after he arrived.

He had figured this out as being about the best way to stir up a rivalry, for there was hardly a man there who did not know something of the reputation of Young Wild West.

They all took to it readily, and the result was that it was not long before a number of cattle were driven out into the open and the cowboys given the word to see who could rope them the quickest.

Jake Potts took part in the contest, but he showed plainly that he stood no chance, and when he finally gave it up and rode over to where Reddy was sitting on the back of his horse, the latter said:

"You ain't much of a roper, are you, Jake?"

"Maybe I'm as good as you," was the reply.

"An' maybe you ain't."

"Want to lay ten dollars that I can't ketch an' throw a steer afore you kin?"

"No, I ain't bettin' jest now. There ain't no bunch within two hundred miles of here as kin hold a candle to my boys," Reddy went on. "You kin see that for yourself, Jake."

"That's all right. They've got the name of bein' good ropers. It jest happens that you got hold of some men what was good at that particular business, that's all."

There happened to be one of the Big Notch Outfit who was very good at the game, and he handled both horse and rope exceptionally good that afternoon.

But Williams, the man who had been placed in charge of the liquors, finally proved his master, and it was decided generally that he was the one who should be pitted against Young Wild West.

"Now see here, boys," Reddy explained, after this had been settled, "I ain't so awful sure that Young Wild West will show what he kin do. But I sorter think he will."

"If he don't he'll show that he ain't half what he's cracked up to be," Jake Potts declared. "I ain't got no use for that kid, anyhow. He got the best of me, I know, but it was only luck."

Reddy turned away and walked over to the mess-house.

"Come on, Williams," he shouted to the cowboy who had won the roping contest. "You ain't got nothin' to do now till Young Wild West gits here. I reckon you had better see about puttin' out the drinks an' cigars. The supper ain't to be served till half-past six, you know."

Williams turned his horse over to one of his friends, and quickly took his place behind the long table that ran nearly the whole length of the room in which the cowboys ate their meals when in from the range.

Tin and china cups were there for the purpose, and the liquor was in jugs.

As it always happens, there are men working upon a ranch who do not touch strong drink, and Reddy had provided something different for them.

He had ginger-pop and sarsaparilla in abundance, so he declared, and he took pains to announce it as the men of both outfits came hurrying into the place.

Potts was very boisterous, and after he had swallowed a couple of more drinks he began to talk in a way that told plainly that he was bent on starting trouble before he left Rough-and-Ready Ranch.

Several times Reddy was compelled to silence his men, for they were bound to take up some of the things that were being said.

Most of his insinuations were directed at Young Wild West, who was not present to defend himself, and probably this angered them more than it might have done if he had been there.

Reddy kept going about among his men, advising them not to drink too much, and it must be said that they listened to him and obeyed.

But the other outfit were bent upon getting all they could, and it became necessary to shut down on them, which Williams promptly did at a word from the ranchman.

When it was announced that no more in the drink line would be given out until the arrival of the bridal party, the Big Notch Outfit marched outside.

Some of them mounted their horses, and then began riding around upon the open spot that lay in front of the ranch-house, shouting and yelling and shooting their revolvers.

It was just about half-past five when one of Potts' men saw a wagon coming down the trail.

"Here they come, boys," he shouted, and then all eyes were turned that way.

Some of the men belonging to the ranch saw the wagon, too, and they knew right away that it contained the newly married couple.

Reddy gave orders for them all to get ready to give a rousing welcome to Tom Ruff and his bride.

Then all hands mounted their horses and started to ride out over the cattle range.

It was the rig Ruff had hired, sure enough.

He was driving a fine team of horses which had been hired from somebody at the settlement.

The blacksmith's daughter arrayed in her best was sitting at his side, while in the back of the wagon were a number of articles that had been given them as presents.

Probably a quarter of a mile behind them came the wagon that was driven by Hop, with Mrs. Ruff sitting at his side and the sky pilot in the back.

Then a little further behind rode Young Wild West and his partners and the girls, with a few others who had decided to come down to the ranch and join in the celebration of the wedding.

The crowd of cowboys rode out and encircled the foremost wagon, yelling themselves hoarse and waving their hats.

Of course Tom Ruff acknowledged the welcome, and putting the team to a faster pace, he rode on straight for the ranch.

But Jake Potts and his gang headed them off, so the young ranchman was compelled to stop about a hundred yards from the house.

"It's all right, boys," he said, as he got out and assisted his bride to alight. "I reckon we'll hoof it the rest of the way."

But there was a lot of handshaking to be done before they could proceed, for even the Big Notch Outfit seemed to be bent upon doing that.

The wagon driven by Hop came up just as the young couple got free from the crowd and hurried to the house.

"Here's the sky pilot, boys," Potts called out. "We've got to have some fun with him."

Then almost before he knew it the rascally cowboys rode up to the wagon and the clergyman was pulled out upon the ground.

CHAPTER X.

THE SKY PILOT WINDS IT UP WITH A SPEECH AND PRAYER.

It was certainly a pleasing time that Young Wild West and his friends had while they were over at the settlement.

The marriage ceremony was duly performed, and every one declared that Tom Ruff and Millie Rogers made a fine-looking couple, indeed.

When they were duly pronounced man and wife the usual form of saluting was gone through, and then they made preparations to set out for the ranch without delay.

But it took some little time to get started, for there were so many people there who were bent upon presenting the couple with some sort of token of their esteem that it was much later than they had expected.

However, when they got the opportunity the young couple drove off amid a shower of rice and several old shoes that were thrown after them by the good-natured crowd.

Wild and his partners with the girls waited until Mr. Ruff rode away with the sky pilot and Hop.

Then they followed leisurely on behind.

When they finally neared the ranch and saw the crowd of cowboys coming to meet them they thought nothing of it, so did not hurry to catch up with those ahead.

It was not until the young deadshot observed the actions of some of the men when they pulled the sky pilot so rudely from the wagon that he decided it was about time to do something.

"Come on, boys," he shouted, and then he gave Spitfire a sharp slap on the neck, and away the noble animal bounded, leaving the others behind.

As the young deadshot neared the scene he saw the Rev. Percival Parks standing upon the ground looking about as if greatly alarmed.

Riding up and down on either side of him were the cowboys, mostly those belonging to the Big Notch Outfit.

All of them were swinging lariats, and the young deadshot knew right away that it was their intention to rope the clergyman.

A few seconds later this very thing happened.

The fellow who had shown up best in the roping contest, but had been defeated by Williams, made a successful throw and roped Parks about the body, pinning his arms to his sides.

Then two others rode around behind him and let go their ropes.

One of them dropped over the captured clergyman's head, so he was doubly caught.

But not satisfied with this, the two rascally cowboys began pulling in opposite directions, and the prisoner naturally shouted for help.

The eyes of the young deadshot blazed as he dashed to the spot.

"Hold on, there!" shouted Wild, as he rode up. "I reckon you are going a bit too far."

A jeering shout was the answer, and then the ropers pulled harder than ever.

The "sky pilot" begged for his life.

This seemed to be exactly what Jake Potts wanted to happen.

"Look out, boys, he's goin' to shoot you down," he shouted.

Crack!

Wild fired a shot and one of the ropes was severed.

But it resulted rather disastrously to the sky pilot, for he went sprawling upon the ground.

Crack!

The young deadshot did not miss, and the other rope was cut in two by the bullet.

Crack, crack!

Two shots came from the cowboys, one of them being fired by the fellow called Sam, who had promised to assist in putting Young Wild West out of the way.

One bullet whizzed past the boy's head, and the other, which was fired more to frighten him than anything else, went high into the air.

But the young deadshot knew right away that some one had tried to kill him, though he could not tell which of the men it was.

Crack!

This time it was Jake Potts who fired, and the bullet went through the crown of Wild's hat.

Wild saw who it was, and without the least hesitation he turned his revolver upon the villain and fired.

A howl of pain came from Potts as he threw up one arm and then tumbled from his horse.

"Horrible!" cried the sky pilot, who had freed himself from the ropes. "You have killed him, Young Wild West."

"Oh, no, dominie," was the cool and easy reply. "I just broke his arm with a bullet, that's all. He tried to kill me, thought, and one of the others did, too. I want to find who he was, and you can bet I'll do it inside of five minutes, too."

"Whoopee, whoopee! Wow, wow, wow!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie, as he rode up slightly in advance of Jim Dart.

Both had their guns ready, and down they swooped upon the Big Notch Outfit.

"I want the sneaking coyote who tried to get me before Potts tried it!" Wild cried, as he dashed right among the rascally gang.

"It was Sam," one of them answered, showing that he was very much afraid he would be mistaken for the guilty party.

"Who is Sam?" Wild cried, as he turned his horse around.

But it was not necessary for the cowboy to tell him, for the villain called Sam at that moment turned to ride away.

"Come back here," came the ringing command.

But it was not heeded.

Then Wild took a deliberate aim with his gun and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

As the sharp report rang out Sam made a quick grab for his hat.

"Come back, or the next bullet will go plumb through you," the young deadshot shouted.

That was quite enough.

Sam came back, his face as pale as a ghost's.

"I didn't mean to hit you, Young Wild West," he cried.

"Don't kill me."

Meanwhile, Jake Potts was sitting on the ground nursing a broken arm.

The clergyman was kneeling at his side trying to console him and assuring him that he would be a great deal better off if he would lead a different life.

Tom Ruff had been forced to come to the scene, leaving his bride in the care of his mother and Mrs. Blake.

"What does all this mean, Reddy?" he asked, as he ran excitedly to his partner.

"It means that the Big Notch Outfit came over here to raise a rumpus. I reckon we had better make 'em vamoose," was the reply.

"If that's the case I reckon we had better. I'll jest tell Young Wild West an' his pards to do it."

Jim Dart heard the words, and before Ruff could reach Wild the young deadshot knew what was required.

"So that's it, eh?" he said, as Tom came running up. "All right. Now then, you fellows belonging to the Big Notch Ranch, get together. Put your leader on his horse."

The sky pilot protested, he declaring that the wounded man should be cared for by a physician as soon as possible.

"That's all right, dominie," the young deadshot said, shaking his head. "He can find a doctor over to the settlement if there is one there. That will be a whole lot quicker, anyhow. Put him on his horse, you fellows."

The ropers of Rough-and-Ready Ranch willingly started to obey the orders, and in less than two minutes Jake Potts was sitting on the back of his own horse.

Then Wild rode up to him and, dismounting, called for a handkerchief, which he used to make a sling.

"You'll remember me as long as that arm pains you, Potts," he said, coolly. "I heard you saying something to the dominie about reforming, but whether you do or not, you'll always know that you barked up the wrong tree when you tried to get me. Now then, you be off with your gang."

Potts, very pale and suffering considerable pain, made no reply, but with his left hand picked up the bridle-rein and started his horse from the spot.

The rest were glad enough to follow him, especially the fellow called Sam, for no doubt he felt that he was going to be shot or lynched.

Wild told him that the next time he saw him he would be apt to take a shot at him, and then Sam declared that he would see to it that they never met again.

Away they went, the ropers of Rough-and-Ready Ranch yelling derisively after them.

"Well, boys," the young deadshot said, when it was all over, "I reckon that will be about all of that part of the business. Now then, let's get in and make merry. We have got to hold a little celebration here, and since that gang has been cleaned up, the chances are there will be no further trouble. I'd like to see everybody get in and enjoy himself. How about the drinkables, Reddy?"

"Right in the mess-house," was the prompt reply. "Come right on. I know what you want. I've got ginger-pop, an' plenty of it. Whoop her up, boys!"

A rousing cheer went up, and then all hands rode over to the mess-house and dismounted.

Williams seemed to be somewhat bashful as he dealt out the temperance drink to Young Wild West.

Reddy noticed this and quickly informed Wild that it was expected that he would show Williams what he could do with a rope.

"I don't know about that, boys," the young deadshot said, with a shake of the head. "It will take considerable time. But if you're satisfied to turn one of the horses loose, I'll endeavor to rope him as quickly as possible. I'll give our friend Williams a good start and let him have a try first."

This was satisfactory, though Williams declared that he would rather not.

However, he was forced to do so, and for the next fifteen minutes there was an exciting time of it.

But Wild easily showed his superiority with a lariat, though he really did not have to try very hard to do it.

"It's all right, Williams," he said. "I suppose I might be called an expert at the business, for I certainly have practised a whole lot, and tried to do different feats. But I'm sure there are few cowboys on the face of the earth who can do any better than you can. What I do is more for exhibition than anything else."

It was just about half-past six when everybody sat down to eat, the cowboys in the mess-house and the other guests in the ranch-house.

Speeches were made, followed by singing, and then one of the cowboys who owned an accordion started up some music and a regular old-fashioned dance began.

The fun lasted well toward midnight, and no one seemed to be more happy than the sky-pilot.

He declared that he had made several converts since his arrival at the ranch, though our friends did not take a great deal of stock in this, for they knew pretty well that the average cowboy would forget such things after the sky pilot was gone.

Parks had been one of the first to make a speech, but along about midnight he was called upon to make another, and rising to his feet, he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this has been one of the most pleasant times of my life. I am always happy when I am delegated to unite a couple in marriage. I am sure Mr. Ruff and his wife will live happily, and I hope it will be for many years. I sincerely hope they will not forget their Creator, and live good and righteous lives. It is the same with all of you. You have my earnest prayers, and if prayers avail anything, and I am sure they do, it is but for me to say that I am confident that I have forged ahead in my ambition to do good. Now then, ladies and gentlemen, before I sit down I want to have a word to say about a certain individual who stands without a peer among his fellow-men. I refer to Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot. He rendered me a valuable service Sunday evening, and I will never forget him for it. But more than that. He saved me from probably being badly hurt upon my arrival here at the ranch. It is not necessary for me to state that I shall always bear him in mind and regard him as one of the greatest heroes now living upon the earth. The friends who travel with him in search of excitement and adventure are all good and true. I know that from the little acquaintance I have with them, and I am sure that it is not necessary for me to advise them in regard to their conduct in the future. They all live pure lives now, it would seem, even though they are not affiliated with any church or creed as far as I know. I won't forget the two men employed by them, who are commonly called heathens. There is a chance for them, too, to come under the wing of the Great Master above, and let us all hope that they will do so in due time. Now then, thanking you all and assuring you that if I can render you a service at any time, I will be only too glad to do so, I will offer up a word of prayer."

The prayer was duly given, and then the cowboys present broke into a rousing cheer, showing that even though they did not altogether agree with the good man in everything he said or did, they thought a "heap of him," as Cheyenne Charlie remarked later on.

This wound up Young Wild West's little adventure with the sky pilot and the ropers of Rough-and-Ready Ranch, but it is safe to say that the young deadshot and his companions were eager to strike something soon that was a little more exciting, though they all felt glad that they had met Parks.

They took their departure from Rough-and-Ready Ranch the following morning, though it was disappointing to the ranchmen and their families.

Before leaving Wild took up a little collection for the four red-haired kids, and Hop Wah very generously clipped in a five-dollar gold-piece.

"You are all right, Hop," Reddy Blake said, as he shook hands with the heathen as they were departing. "You may have a yaller skin, but you're white through an' through."

Then he led the ropers in a rousing cheer.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S LUCKY DROP; OR, ARIETTA AND THE OUTLAWS."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Ever since a story that the State of Michigan wanted a man to hunt wolves on Isle Royale was printed, the government's office, the land commissioner's office, the game warden's office, and, in fact, most of the State offices, have been deluged with applications for the job. It seems that every one in the country wants to slaughter wolves. Few of the applicants have ever hunted wolves, but all of them "know" they can.

Martin Stump, a Redondo Beach life guard, is perfectly comfortable while pins or even knives are run into his flesh. On withdrawing the pins, only a slight indication of blood showed and the wounds healed almost immediately. The fact that he was not sensitive to pain from such punctures was discovered by Stump while working in a machine shop, where he was cut by a tool. He also discovered that he could check the flow of blood by concentrating his mind upon it, and this led to experiments which showed the remarkable condition of his nervous system.

An improvised burglar alarm system was responsible for the capture of one burglar in the village of Byron, west of Rochester, Minn., when two men entered the general store of A. L. Cutting. Mr. Cutting had contrived the system, which was connected with the telephone exchange. As the two men opened the window in the store the alarm sounded and the telephone operator notified Mr. Cutting, who armed himself, and, assisted by his clerk, caught one of the men, who gave the name of Frank Foster. The other, whose name is said to be Frank Bailey, escaped. Foster was lodged in the County Jail here.

Fox farming is the occupation of James Kramer, former Muskegon resident, now residing at Athabasca Landing, northern Alberta, Canada, who is visiting in Muskegon. Kramer has been in his present occupation and location for six years. The foxes are secured by trading with the Indian trappers, white men being unable to acquire the trick of trapping them. About fifty foxes are now owned by Kramer, they being in black, silver and cross breeds and worth about \$12,000. On his way from Alberta here, stopping in Chicago, he sold three silver females for \$3,500, the prices ranging much higher since the outbreak of the war.

Last spring, when the Chicago White Sox and New York Giants' world-touring party landed in New York, there was a wild scramble on the part of baseball magnates to sign the players who had returned. Federal League agents were there and consequently the players were able to get almost any sum they demanded. Dick Egan, an infielder, who had been traded to Brooklyn by Cincinnati, asked \$25,000 for three years and was signed at that figure. It has proved a costly investment for the

Brooklyn team, as Egan has been sitting on the bench most of the season, drawing about \$54.10 per game for doing nothing. He failed to show the form of O'Mara, a youngster Brooklyn purchased.

A great big eight-inch centipede, an old fellow with black body and light-brown claws, invaded the French class at the High School, Austin, Texas. When first noticed he was crawling up Mme. Muenier's dress. The French class of nine girls screeched simultaneously, but Miss Lucie Wooten was the heroine of the hour, knocking the centipede from the teacher's clothing. One would have thought a mouse was loose in the schoolroom by the way the young women hopped upon the benches. The centipede escaped to its hole in the wall, but in a little while came out again. With the aid of the janitor and his broom and a boy, who procured a bottle, the centipede was captured.

A man who eats only every three or four days would be considered a novelty almost anywhere, but when that man is a farm hand, who works hard in the hot sun and throughout many hours, he is a marvel indeed. Such a man is LeRoy Smith, a young farmer who lives five miles from Gentry, Mo. He weighs 265 pounds, despite his poor appetite and hard work, and is able to do as much or more work than the average "hand." This year he has worked all through the harvest and threshing season for the farmers in this vicinity, but has never eaten oftener than every three days. In vain did the country people plead with him to partake of their food, but he refused on the plea that he was not hungry and did not wish to eat.

While trying to tie a bull in the barn of the Motter farm, about a mile and a half back of Highspire, Pa., Eugene Book, fifteen years old, was gored severely when the animal attacked him. Peter Jacobs, a farmer, also was injured when the animal turned upon him as he was trying to rescue Book. With blood streaming from wounds on his chest and arms, the farmer, with several farm hands, battled with the bull for a half hour before it could be caught and tied in the barn. Young Book had a hole about three inches deep in his neck, and suffered lacerations and bruises. He was taken to the Harrisburg hospital, where he underwent an operation. When Book, who is employed by Jacobs, went to the barn to feed the stock he noticed the bull was at large in the stable, and he tried to catch him. As soon as he opened the door the bull rushed at him and knocked him down. Before Jacobs could get him away the animal had sunk its horn into the youth's neck and had injured him probably internally. The animal then turned upon the farmer, and before he could get away inflicted several deep lacerations about the chest, arms and legs. Grabbing pitchforks, Jacobs and several other farmhands attacked the big animal.

WHO WON?

— OR —

A STORY OF TWO BOYS AND FORTY INDIANS

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIII (continued)

"Si, senior. I'm sorry you had such a gruesome job, but you have profited more by the battle than we have."

The old Mexican looked around keenly at him, as if inquiring:

"What do you mean by that?"

"You have all their weapons and ammunition," Jack explained; "but you are welcome to them. We didn't want them."

"You can have them if you wish," he replied.

"Don't want them, senior. Our rifles fire sixteen times without recharging, hence they are far better than sixteen weapons. for we can carry them easy, fire rapidly, and deal death to an enemy."

Then it was that Anita wanted to hear the story of their troubles with the Apaches, and why the old chief wanted to search the cabin for his daughter.

Jack undertook to explain the trouble, but her ignorance of English made it an exceedingly difficult task.

He told her that what she didn't understand to let him know, and he would try to explain it so she could comprehend it.

It took him nearly an hour to give her the entire story.

Then she asked if Running Water was beautiful.

"Si, senior: she was very beautiful for an Indian, but in comparison with yourself she was ugly. You know the Indians have high cheek bones, which is incompatible with beauty; but I think she is a good girl. She and one of her maidens wanted to come away with us. They aided us to escape from the village, for all the bucks were determined to get our horses and our rifles if they could. The girls told us that they were going to kill us that night so as to get our horses and weapons, and aided us to get away unperceived. Their presence with us prevented the dogs from giving the alarm. They told us plainly they would follow us to the setting sun and cook our meals and wait upon us all their lives, but we didn't want them. We treated them kindly, flattered them, told them they were beautiful, and that we would never forget them. Were they to overtake us we would treat them kindly, for we are not ungrateful for the services they rendered us. I've always believed that the man who trifles with a girl's affections ought to be hanged or shot or drowned."

"Si, senior: but men do such things everywhere."

"Si, seniorita, but it is wrong. It is dastardly, and death at the stake is hardly punishment enough for such

villainy. Such a charge cannot be truthfully lodged against me."

"Nor me, either," put in Ned.

They sat there by the camp-fire talking till it was near midnight. The old mother listened and said little. Pedro said nothing at all. He seemed to be thinking hard all the time.

Finally the old man arose, and they all said:

"Buenos noches, senors!" and returned to the cabin.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Feeling perfectly secure against any farther trouble with the Apaches, Jack and Ned lay down on their blankets and slept soundly. They didn't think it at all necessary for them to keep watch.

They heard nothing to excite their suspicions, but when they arose a little before the sun the next morning, they were dumfounded at finding their bronchos had disappeared.

Ned was the first to make the discovery.

"Jack, our horses are gone!" he exclaimed.

"Gone where?" Ned asked.

"Tell me, and I'll tell you, but they are gone."

They both went to the spot where they had left their horses tied the night before. One of the limbs was found cut off just a little above where the lariat was tied to it. The other lariat was probably untied.

They looked around to find a trail. It led down into the timber in the direction of the stream. They followed it to where the horses evidently stopped to drink, and in the moist earth they found a moccasin footprint.

"By George, Jack! The Indians got them after all," Ned exclaimed. "Here are moccasin prints in the soft earth."

They examined the prints, and Jack agreed with him that they were made by Indians, and only two at that.

They looked at each other, and did a lot of hard thinking.

"Say, Jack, let's follow the trail till we catch them."

"Let's get breakfast first, and think about it," Jack suggested.

"What in thunder do you want to think about it for? Are you going to let the pesky thieves keep them?"

"Well, I don't want to, but let's have breakfast as soon as we can get it."

They returned to the camp-fire, and began preparing to broil some steak and make a pot of coffee.

Suddenly Ned looked up, and said:

"Jack, it may be those two girls. They've taken the horses in the expectation that we will follow and overtake them."

"What's the matter with you, Ned?" Jack asked. "Those tracks there showed feet larger than yours or mine. Those girls have very small feet. They would have made their presence known to us instead of stealing our horses and leaving. There were only two, for we saw their tracks, and those two were the fellows who escaped our shots yesterday. They came back while we were asleep and got the bronchos."

"Great catamounts! I wonder if you are right, Jack?"

"I'm sure of it, Ned. It was the horses and our rifles that they wanted, but we had the guns in the blankets with us, so they couldn't get at them."

"Jack, I wish I was sure that your guess was right," said Ned after a little silence.

"Well, it's easy enough to figure it out. Two got away yesterday, you know."

"Yes, I understand that."

"And two came back and got our horses, for we saw the tracks of only two."

"Yes," and Ned nodded affirmatively; "but shall we let them keep them?"

"Yes; they are not worth the trouble of following them; and, besides, that will probably save us the trouble of being bothered with those girls."

"Why, how's that?"

"Well, I figure it out this way, Ned. Old Red Wolf and his twenty bucks got on our trail, and followed us up here to this camp."

"Yes, that's true."

"It is probable, also, that the girls know they were on the trail. Now, those two fellows who got those horses will hurry back to the village about as fast as they can, and they'll brag that they had a great battle; that all the other Indians were killed, and they slew us and got the horses. The girls will follow the trail of the horses to the village, and, when they hear that we are killed, and the presence of the horses will be proof of it, they will cease chasing us, and I'd rather lose the horses than have them catch up with us."

"Great catamounts! I believe you are right, but hanged if I don't hate to lose the animals, for we will have to carry our camp outfits on our own backs hereafter, and that's something I don't like. I don't like to be hunting game with a fifty or sixty pound pack on my back."

All the time they were talking Ned was broiling the steak, and Jack was making the coffee.

When the coffee was made Jack called out to the Mexican in the cabin to come out and get some of it.

The old man and Pedro came out to eat.

When they reached the camp-fire Jack asked why they didn't bring other cups for the senora and senorita.

"We will get them, senors," said the old man, and returning to the cabin with his own cup filled, he soon brought out two more.

"Senor," said Jack, as they filled the two extra cups, "our bronchos are gone."

The old man gave a start, turned quickly, and gazed in the direction where he had last seen the bronchos the evening before.

"Senor, do you suspect either my son or myself of taking them?" he asked.

"No, senor. They were taken by Indians, for down by the creek we saw the prints of their moccasins plainly outlined in the moist earth, and there were tracks of two only, so we believe they are the two who escaped death yesterday."

"Will you follow the trail?" the old man asked.

"No," said Jack. "Let them go. We have had too much trouble with them. They have played a desperate game, and won a small trick. It cost the lives of thirty-eight of them. The game was played by forty Indians against two boys, and it will be a story worth telling. Naturally the question will arise: Who won? We'll claim the game. They got half what they started in to get. They wanted our two horses and the two Winchesters. They got the horses, but the price they paid for them is worse than a straight out defeat."

"Si senor," said the old man, nodding his head affirmatively several times. "They paid too much."

Pedro returned to the cabin and reported that the Indians had taken away the two horses of the two hunters.

Anita came running out, more excited than they had ever seen her before. She actually went down to the creek with Jack and her brother to see the footprints of the Indians in the soft earth.

That satisfied her, and she saw, too, that only two Indians were engaged in the theft. She was glad when she heard Jack say they would not follow the trail, but would let the game end where it was.

"It's a queer sort of story," Jack remarked. "The story of two boys and forty Indians. The redskins may claim that they won, but nobody else would care to win a game at such a cost. We'll camp here for a week or two, and get our fill of hunting. Then we'll return to our homes in the East," and with that they returned to the camp, and there ends the story of Two Boys and Forty Indians.

THE END.

COMING NEXT WEEK

A NEW SERIAL

THE MOUNTAIN QUEEN

—OR—

THE FAIR BANDIT

By "Pawnee Jack"

Read the Opening Chapters

NEXT WEEK

ITEMS OF INTEREST

MOLLY PITCHER'S FRIEND.

In excellent health in spite of her advanced years, Mrs. Samuel Sipe, Cumberland county's oldest resident, a personal friend of Molly Pitcher, the heroine of Monmouth, celebrated her one hundred and second birthday recently. Her health is good, and although she is unable to walk she can hear clearly and her mind is a marvel for clearness and recollection. Mrs. Sipe was born in Switzerland, October 5, 1812, and came with her parents when only six years of age to this country. The trip was made in a sailing vessel and the voyage consumed sixteen weeks. She lived in Philadelphia for a time and came to Carlisle 95 years ago. She remembers the old stage coaches that made this a stopping point on the road to Pittsburgh and also the running of the first train on the Cumberland Valley, July 4, 1857.

Her stories of Molly Pitcher, with whom she was personally familiar, contain many unique incidents in the life of this peculiar heroine.

ENGLAND ARRESTED GERMAN SPIES.

Perhaps the biggest and most unpleasant surprise that awaited the Kaiser and his advisers at the outbreak of the war was the immediate arrest in England of certain spies, which disclosed the hitherto unsuspected fact to their masters that the business on which these men had been engaged in England was fully known to the English government. If there was one thing that the Germans believed more than another it was that their spies in England were, for the most part, entirely unsuspected.

With the exception of a few highly placed personages, from whom the Germans probably received some trustworthy information, every German spy in England was known to Scotland Yard, as was, most probably, the character of the information he was giving, and, therefore, allowed to give to his government.

In this connection it is a noteworthy fact that nearly all the Germans now placed in confinement in England are of the well-to-do classes.

SHACKLETON STARTS FOR THE ANTARCTIC.

The European war has not prevented the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition from embarking for the South, notwithstanding the fact that some of its members belong, as Shackleton himself formerly did, to the British Naval Reserve. When the reserves were mobilized at the end of July, Sir Ernest offered the services of the expedition, with its stores and provisions, to the admiralty, but fortunately the offer was declined with thanks. The "Endurance," the ship of the Weddell Sea party, left the Thames August 1st and Plymouth August 8th, carrying part of the expedition to Buenos Aires. The "Aurora," which is to carry the Ross Sea section of the expedition, is now at Hobart, Tasmania, and will sail for the Antarc-

tic about the beginning of December. Shackleton and the members of his staff who had not already sailed on the "Endurance" left England September 18th by mail steamers; half of the expedition sailing for Buenos Aires, and the other half for Tasmania. Their departure was delayed by the necessity of buying in England scientific instruments to replace those which had been ordered from Germany.

NO WHITE FLAG FOR FEDERALS.

After an all-day session, which was interrupted by a brief recess the other afternoon, the annual meeting of the Federal League of baseball clubs adjourned, subject to the call of an executive committee composed of President Gilmore, R. B. Ward of Brooklyn and J. E. Robertson of Buffalo.

"We spent the greater part of the day in discussing financial and legal matters of a private nature," President Gilmore said, in announcing the adjournment. "I can positively say that the Federal League will continue its course, with the assurance given us as to substantial financial backing, without regard to what may or may not be done by organized baseball.

The league circuit remains exactly as during the past season, but if it is found desirable to make a change, the executive committee will attend to that, and if necessary another general meeting will be convened either here or in some other convenient city."

There was an apparently well-authenticated report current that William Fischer, catcher of the Brooklyn Nationals, had signed a contract to play with the Chicago Federals next season, but it lacked confirmation by any of the Federal League officials. Second Baseman George Cutshaw, also of the Brooklyn Nationals, was said to have been negotiating with the St. Louis Federals, but this also could not be officially confirmed.

President Gilmore said that he had received a list of twenty-five Major League players from Larry Schlafly of the Buffalo club, all of whom were reported to be willing to go over to the new organization. He also stated that within six weeks he would sign his staff of umpires, which he would select from among about sixteen applicants for these positions.

In regard to a proposed transfer of the Kansas City franchise, proposals were received from prominent men in Cleveland, Cincinnati, West Philadelphia and Toronto. Of these the Philadelphia proposition was looked upon with the most favor, as Pittsburgh could then be placed in the western half of the circuit and the playing schedule arranged to much better advantage with the long jump to Kansas City eliminated.

During the meeting the league championship pennant was awarded to the Indianapolis club, and President J. E. Krause of the winning club said that he expected to retain the flag for many seasons to come.

DARING DICK DARE

— OR —

LOST IN THE WHITE DEATH

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIV (continued)

"Stay with them, Jack.. I'll push forward and see if I can't find a way out!" cried Dick. "There are three of these galleries here ahead of us, and I believe one of them must lead out into the open air."

They had come into a semi-circular chamber with the three galleries or tunnels, as we have been calling them, opening out from it.

A whiff of fresh air had struck Dick's face, and it was that which gave him hope.

Jack, who was in almost as bad a condition as the rest, owing to the choking he had received from the lariat, consented readily enough to remain in the dark, and Dick picked up the lantern and hurried along the right-hand gallery, for he thought it was from this one that the wind came.

He had gone but a few steps when he saw a bright light ahead of him.

It seemed to be a fire. Dick stopped and called to Jack, who joined him immediately, and both stood peering ahead.

"We want to find out what it means," said Dick; "but all the same I have my doubts."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Suppose we have been going around in a circle? Suppose we are coming back into the big cave?"

"It might be."

"Come ahead. We'll soon prove it, Jack. We'll leave the lantern here."

They set down the lantern and hurried forward.

In a moment the tunnel took a turn, and they lost sight of the fire, but still they pushed on, until all at once they passed around a projection in the rocks and came out into the same old cave.

"Thunder and guns! If it hain't them two boys!" shouted a voice, and Dick and Jack saw the fearful mistake they had made.

The fire was burning close to the heap of gold ore, and gathered around it were Gopher Jim and all his Indians engaged in emptying a keg of whisky which belonged to the miners.

It was Gopher Jim who had spoken, but he was no drunker than the rest of the band, and he instantly covered the boys with his rifle while the Indians with wild yells sprang upon them, and before they knew it Dick and Jack were prisoners, and it did not make matters any more cheerful when they saw Pete Harriman and Nat

Thomas lying bound hand and foot upon the other side of the pile of ore.

"This is the feller we want!" cried Gopher Jim. "He knows where the rest of the gold is hidden. We'll roast him alive but we'll make him tell. Pitch him into the fire, boys!"

And the Indians who were dragging Dick Dare toward the burning pile would have surely done it if at that very instant the man with the megaphone had not made his voice heard again.

"This way! This way! Here they are!" the strange voice roared, and suddenly the strange old man appeared at the entrance to the tunnel on the right, closely followed by a band of armed men.

"Up hands, every mother's son of you!" shouted a tall man, throwing up his rifle and drawing a bead on Gopher Jim.

"Steve Trimble!" cried Dick. "At last! At last!"

Well might Dick say "At last!" for it was all over now.

Twenty-five men, heavily armed, rushed into the cave, making short work of the twelve drunken Indians and Gopher Jim.

Steve Trimble was the guide attached to Captain Quitman's surveying party, and leading the rescue was Captain Quitman himself.

"Thank heaven, we have found you boys!" he exclaimed, hurrying up to Dick and Jack, while his followers made prisoners of the Apaches and Gopher Jim. "We have been searching everywhere for you, and we never should have succeeded if this man had not come into camp this morning and told us that you were up here, and—why, where is he? Confound the crazy fellow! He is gone!"

It was true. The man with the megaphone had stolen away into the recesses of the cave, nor was he seen again.

It made but little difference, however, for he had done his work, and Dick Dare and his friends were saved.

Captain Quitman and Steve Trimble remembered the way by which they had come well enough.

Dick led them back to Nettie, and the unconscious girl was carried down the mountain to the camp, the way lying through the tunnels, out on the mountainside, and then by a steep path down to the valley below, where Dick and Jack received a regular ovation from their friends.

Next day the prisoners, both red and white, were turned over to the sheriff, who had been sent for by Captain Quitman.

Gopher Jim and his Apaches had long been wanted for

various crimes, and in the end the Indians were sent to Eastern penitentiaries, while Gopher Jim was hung.

Pete Harriman and Nat Thomas were old offenders, too, and were taken to Santa Fe, where they were imprisoned on long sentences.

Charlie Coons disappeared in the night, and, although no one could ever prove it, the sheriff claimed that Dick set him free.

Nothing was ever seen of Mr. Tyler, the man with the megaphone, although persistent search was made for him, as it was well known that the mountain mine belonged to him.

The sheriff subsequently took possession of the gold ore in the cave, and turned it over to the territorial authorities. It was worked up, and now a goodly sum stands to the credit of Mr. Tyler or his heirs if they ever appear to claim it; if not, the money goes to Uncle Sam.

Dick and Jack, in company with Captain Quitman and others, climbed the mountain and went down into the Valley of the White Death, where they buried the body of Mr. Mosler.

Nettie did not go, for she was still very ill, and was sent on to Santa Fe to a hospital.

Later Dick visited her there, and later still—two years later—she and Dick were quietly married.

That was long after the surveying party completed its work, and Dick and Jack were then employed on the new railroad line, which proved a great success.

To-day the boys are partners in a large cattle ranch, and are doing well, and all owing to their own efforts, too.

For in business it is just the same with our hero as ever; he takes big chances, and always "gets there"—he is the same old Daring Dick Dare.

THE END.

A New Serial

BEGINS NEXT WEEK

—READ—

DICKERING DICK

—OR—

THE LUCKY BOY TRADER

By Dick Ellison

Don't Miss This Treat

NEXT WEEK

SAYS DELUGE PRECEDED FALL OF MAN.

According to a translation of a recently deciphered inscription on one of the Sumerian tablets, Prof. Langdon, of Jesus College, Oxford, says the deluge preceded the fall of man. The tablet, which has been almost completely restored, contains six finely written columns of about 240 lines, most of which are intact. It begins by describing the land of primeval bliss, which it locates at Dilmun, an island in the Persian Gulf. "In this paradise dwelled mankind, whom Nintud, the creatress, with the help of Enlil had created. After the deluge, this king is called

Tagtug, the Divine. And this Tagtug lives in a garden, is himself a gardener, and the wise Enki reveals unto him wisdom. The Greek historians, too, preserve this legend in the story of Oannes, who rose from the Persian Gulf to teach men wisdom in primeval times. And so Tagtug, as in the Hebrew history of Noah, plants a garden, names the trees and plants, and is permitted to eat of all but the cassia tree, an herb of healing *par excellence*. Of this plant Tagtug was not to eat, for thereby he would attain eternal life. Mankind until this time possessed extreme longevity, but not immortality. Tagtug, on his own initiative, takes and eats. He is cursed by Nintud and becomes a prey to disease and ordinary mortality. Thus in the original Sumerian story Noah, the survivor of the flood, is the one who eats from the tree of life. No woman is concerned in this disobedience which resulted in our loss of perfect health, peace and countless years."

SPIES.

A German officer interned with some other prisoners of war in South Ireland has given to the English officer in charge of the prisoners some information which throws an interesting light on the Germans' view of the results of their elaborate system of espionage.

According to the German officer it was fully believed at German headquarters that as soon as the British mobilization was ordered the transport workers would strike. This information was conveyed to the German headquarters staff three weeks before the outbreak of the war and was fully relied on. According to the German officer the information came from a spy who was supposed to be closely in touch with working class organizations in England.

This spy was in Berlin when war was declared, and later when his information proved to be false, he was arrested. A similar fate has overtaken several other spies, who had evidently been manufacturing information, for which they were very highly paid. Some of these men, according to the German officer, have been shot.

Most definite and apparently accurate information kept reaching German military headquarters up to the outbreak of the war concerning the recruiting possibilities in England in the event of war. All this information, gleaned from every part of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, confirmed the German military authorities in the belief that 400,000 would be the limit of England's recruiting power. It was believed that when no more voluntary recruits could be obtained in England conscription would have to be resorted to, and this would lead to political divisions and break up all chances of political unity.

Such, according to the German officer, was the information which the Kaiser and his military organizers received and believed. A general election, fought on the question of conscription, was to be one of the events which would lead to England's downfall somewhere about October or November.

Now, apparently, great mistrust of all information received from spies who have been working in England prevails at German military and naval headquarters, and plans based upon such information are continually revised or altered altogether.

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New York

Scott Price, cement contractor, Logansport, Ind., is engaged during his spare time in building his own grave. He is constructing a mausoleum for his own use in Mt. Hope cemetery. "I am not dying just yet, but I know I will die some day and I want to be prepared," he explained.

A pack sack containing the ears and tails of eight wolves was brought to the county clerk's office the other morning by Will White of the town of Frederic, Burnett County, Wis. Bounty money totaling county orders of \$80 and State orders for a similar sum was paid for the pelts. White is the only rural resident in this section of the State who makes his living entirely from bounty money. Each week he sends several scalps and the monthly receipts run high in the majority of cases. When one county clerk is given his supply of pelts the trapper turns to another officer, and thereby varies his bounty among the counties in this part of the State.

Pressure on the banks forced the bottom of the Panama Canal at Culebra Cut up about twenty-four feet on the night of October 11, a dispatch from Panama reports. This blocked the use of the canal by all vessels having a draught of more than fifteen feet. The stoppage may last several weeks. Dredges are at work removing the obstruction. Seven ships are waiting for passage through the canal and the delay will affect at least sixty more vessels. Colonel

Goethals made an examination at once and found that the trouble had occurred on the east side of the canal, north of Gold Hill. A large mass of traprock, mixed with loose earth, had slipped into the channel. Colonel Goethals in his last report pointed out that the earth in Culebra Cut had not reached a state of equilibrium and that it probably would be necessary to continue dredging operations there for many months after the waterway was opened.

June and July were terrible months for the city of Valparaiso, Chili, which was flooded by torrential rains. Vice-Consul Aldis B. Easterling writes that water from the hills poured down through the streets, carrying mud and sand in such quantities that the drains rapidly filled and choked. As a result the business portion of the city has been covered with mud and sand, ranging in depth from a few inches over most of the streets to several feet in one section, where several business houses were forced to close. Traffic was greatly impeded in all parts of the city, including the street railways to the various suburbs, which have been out of commission for a month, and strong winds from the north have delayed discharging and loading of cargoes in the bay. The city of Valparaiso has under consideration a plan to prevent the recurrence of this calamity by planting trees on the hills above the city. The project is estimated to cost in the neighborhood of \$200,000 United States gold and requires four years for completion.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A twenty-eight-pound muskie was caught by a set line in Lake Winnebago by Michael Govke of Black Wolf. This is the first time in twenty-five years that Lake Winnebago, Wis., has yielded up a muskie.

Accused of stealing the army revolver of Gen. U. S. Grant, Harry Lockhart, forty, of No. 180 Bergen street, Brooklyn, was held without bail for the grand jury by Magistrate Nash in the Adams Street Court. The complainant was William B. Scarborough, a banker, of No. 61 Pierrepont street, a grandnephew of the late President and war hero.

Three little pigs at Gaynor's Corners, Appleton, Wis., not realizing their limitations, got too near a half barrel of sour beer that had been thrown out. They got all they could drink and it was enough. When they got through they could not navigate with any degree of certainty. They tried to resume rooting, but their backs were too limp and they finally gave it up.

Joseph Farkis, a mechanic, drew \$982 from the bank the other morning, and after working through the afternoon at his job as a mechanic at Fifty-first street and Tenth avenue started for his home, No. 408 East Sixty-fifth street, New York. He boarded a northbound Tenth avenue car and was jostled by several men. Then he discovered that his pocket was picked. He reported the theft to the detectives of the Second Branch Bureau. The money represented all of Farkis' savings, which he had expected to use in making the first payment on a home.

Following a rattlesnake to its den, Fred Williams, a farmer on the head of Seventy-six creek, Sheridan, Wyo., was attacked by what seemed to him to be hundreds of reptiles. With an ordinary hoe handle Williams killed 211 snakes and only quit because of exhaustion. Williams says the den has two prongs, that he killed snakes from only one side of the winter quarters and believes several hundred reptiles will be found in the unmolested side of the den when he returns there to clean out the nest. The snakes were drowsy and had evidently holed up for the winter, as they were twisted together in knots.

Hostile incidents between the Chinese and Japanese continue. The Chinese government is still protesting against the presence of Japanese forces in China, but restrains her soldiers from any overt acts. The latest protest concerns the Japanese seizure of the German torpedo boat destroyer S90. This vessel, after having sunk the Japanese cruiser Takachiho, was run up on the Chinese coast at a point sixty miles to the south of Tsingtu. The Chinese authorities took possession of her, but the Japanese came along by sea and drove the Chinese away. Herr von Maltzan, the German minister in Peking, has protested to the foreign office against the interning of the S90's crew by China, contending that the Chinese government has permitted Japanese soldiers to land upon her territory without taking them under arrest.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Cassidy—Man, ye're drunk. Casey—'Tis a lie ye're spakin, Cassidy. Ye'd not dare to say that to me if Oi was sober. Cassidy—If ye wuz sober ye'd hov sinse enough to know ye wuz drunk.

Proud Mother (complacently)—My oldest daughter is studying the languages abroad. She speaks French and Italian as well as she does English. Visitor (innocently)—And does she speak English well?

"They had been married a year before anybody knew it, and even then their secret was discovered only by accident." "Indeed!" "Yes; one evening at a card party they thoughtlessly played partners, and the way they quarreled let the whole thing out!"

"Botheration!" exclaimed Mrs. Laytely, who was hurriedly adjusting her veil. "Where on earth do all the pins go to?" "You've got me," replied her husband thoughtfully, "for, you see, they're always pointed in one direction and headed in another."

"Well, did he pay you?" asked the wife of a dentist who had been to collect a bill for a full set of false teeth that he had made for a man almost a year before. "Pay me?" growled the dentist. "Not only did he refuse to pay me, but he actually had the effrontery to gnash at me—with my teeth!"

When Johnnie was late at school the teacher asked him what had detained him. "We've got a new baby at our house," explained Johnnie. "and I had to go for the doctor." "That's all right," said the teacher, adding from force of habit, "but see that you don't let it happen again."

In a certain school a teacher was giving his class reading. It came to a part about a woman drowning herself. The teacher asked a boy to read again. He began: "She threw herself into the river. Her husband, horror-stricken, rushed to the bank"—The teacher said: "Now, tell me why the husband rushed to the bank?" Quick and sharp came his answer: "Please, sir, to get the insurance money."

A SNAKE STORY.

By Alexander Armstrong

"You may talk about your Catskills," said a man on the hotel piazza at Front Royal, Virginia, "but did you ever in your life see anything more beautiful than that?"

And he pointed to the billowy range of Blue Ridge Mountains, whose tops were losing themselves in the soft misty hue of the twilight.

"I tell you," he continued, "there are no more beautiful mountains in this country than those Virginia peaks. There is only one thing I have got against them—they are just full of snakes."

"So I have heard; but it has never been my fortune to meet with any face to face," remarked a fellow-traveler.

"You may thank your lucky stars then," said the other. "I met one face to face in the most unpleasant manner a few nights ago."

"I had occasion to take a trip on horseback—you know everybody rides on horseback in these parts—and after trotting along for two or three hours I struck up into the mountain."

"It was beautiful, and I gazed enchanted upon a scene which I cannot describe."

"Arousing myself from my reverie I was warned by the deepening shadows to hasten on."

"As the shadows deepened and objects became less discernible, my horse began to manifest unmistakable signs of fear and uneasiness, shying at times so violently as to almost throw me from the saddle."

"At last, to my great satisfaction, I distinguished the sound of human voices."

"Pushing on in the direction from which they proceeded, I came upon a group of men standing in front of a rude log cabin."

"They were rough mountaineers, and made a living by distilling whisky."

"Riding up, I inquired the distance to my place of destination."

"It was several miles further on. I was not acquainted with the way."

"It would have been dangerous for me to have kept on, and I asked if I could be accommodated for the night."

"Get down, stranger; get down," was the ready response. "We haven't much in this wild country, but what we have is at your service."

"I was pretty stiff after my long ride, and gladly dismounted."

"As I jumped from my horse I saw upon the ground at their feet what, upon examination, proved to be a large snake."

"It was a moccasin, six feet long, and an ugly looking customer."

"My exclamation of alarm drew from one of the men the remark that the snake had been dispatched but a few moments before my arrival."

"We had a pretty hard job of it," he said; "but we fixed him at last. We don't care much for them, but the fact is, when we do spot a big snake close by we don't choose to have him loafing about the place too familiarly, you

know, for he might snap up one of us when we are not thinking of it, so we settled him at once."

"How do you do it?"

"Well, when he is a fine old rattler we try to secure him without breaking his hide. We draw his attention by putting something on the end of a pole, on which is also a snare, and when the old fellow pops up his head from behind the log, we just drop the snare over him and one of us runs up, catches him by the neck and puts a spike through his head. That is, when we catch them to stuff for museums."

"I listened in silence. Not a very inviting prospect for a night's lodging, I thought, as I stood debating in my mind the advisability of moving on in spite of darkness and rough roads."

"A summons from the cabin to supper decided me, however. The cool mountain air had proved a keen appetizer, and I thoroughly enjoyed the plain but substantial meal of corn bread and bacon."

"Supper over, we repaired again to the front of the cabin."

"A feeling of exhilaration came over me—a feeling which a man can only experience by going into the very heart of the mountain."

"The moon had risen, and around and above me the trees nodded in a flood of silver light. Picturesque and beautiful beyond description was the scene, banishing from my mind all disagreeable and unpleasant thoughts."

"But even the loveliness of the night could not dispel the weariness which was gradually stealing over me nor tempt me to remain, so accompanied by my host I was shown to my quarters."

"It was a little, low room, seeming to be off from the main building. Through the chinks in the logs came the moonlight in little patches. The window, a small porthole concern, was built right up against the mountain, and beneath it huge clumps of rocks and underbrush."

"As I stood in the dismal, comfortless room, I confess to a feeling of great nervousness. I did not like the look of things at all."

"But to my mind flashed the stories of the evening. I was conscious for the first time in my life of being actually afraid."

"I set about my preparations for the night with as good a stock of courage as I could summon to my aid, making a careful survey of the room and filling up the chinks as best I could."

"Hardly had I finished ere my candle flickered, spluttered spitefully, and went out."

"I sought my straw bed, placed my revolver under my coat, and settled myself to try to sleep."

"But sleep I could not."

"After passing what seemed hours of wakefulness, extreme weariness and the low wind sighing through the pines threw me at last into a restless, uneasy slumber, in which my dreams were filled with frightful visions."

"From one more horrible than all the rest I awoke with a start."

"From the foot of the bed came a harsh, grating sound."

"What could it be?"

"I raised myself up, only to sink back with a low cry of horror.

"The moonlight, streaming into my window, revealed to me my situation.

"There, at the side of the bed, slowly coiling itself for a spring, was a huge snake.

"I quickly felt for my revolver.

"It was gone.

"At that moment the snake sprang towards me, just grazing my shoulder and falling with a heavy thud upon the floor by my side.

"With one bound I reached the door, and with a wild cry of alarm, aroused the inmates.

"Almost instantly all hands were on the spot.

"They found his snakeship just retiring through one of the holes between the logs.

"He was soon disposed of, and proved to be a rattler seven feet long, with thirteen rattles.

"A search was made for my revolver.

"It was found to have slipped from beneath my coat to the floor, probably while I was asleep.

"Sleep came to my eyes no more that night.

"No sooner had the gray dawn appeared than I mounted my horse and left the cabin with a feeling of great relief."

MY FIRST LOVE.

Often will I sit down after my evening meal, and, lighting my pipe, proceed to dream as I puff away.

The other night I was dreaming as usual, when the servant maid came in.

"Please, sur," she said, "missus says that you dropped this out of your pocket," and as she spoke, she handed me a worn picture.

I thanked the girl and took the picture.

Yes, it was Jane Skaggs.

My acquaintance with her began at a private school, ruled over with despotic sway by Miss Geranium Skaggs, a hard-featured, pippin-faced handler of the rod.

Jane was her sister.

She came but seldom into the schoolroom, because she was too high-toned for that.

Her elder sister did all of the work, while Jane reaped the profits.

I first beheld Jane at a select reception given by the Misses Skaggs, to which I was invited, probably because I had a new suit and wore a watch.

There did I behold Jane.

I fell madly in love with her, for the ways of Cupid are strange.

I was at her elbow all the while.

I picked up her fan when she dropped it, I procured freshments, I ran errands for her—indeed my devotion knew no bounds.

And she smiled upon me.

What bliss!

Still, there was hardly ever bliss without an alloy of some sort.

My alloy that night stood about six feet high, weighed about two hundred pounds, had little mutton chop whisk-

ers, and appeared to be on altogether too intimate terms with Jane.

Indeed, I heard him call her Jennie.

By and by there came along a servant girl.

I called to her.

"Well, young master, what is it?" asked she.

"Who's he?" asked I.

"That's Mr. Rockets. He's sweet on Miss Jane. Expect it will be a match."

The rest of the night was a sort of nightmare.

All was blackness and despair.

And to add to my misery, Rockets—yes—Rockets!—came up to me and said, patting my shoulder:

"Little boy, what ails you? You don't seem to be enjoying yourself!"

Little boy!

How I longed for a dagger, so that I could plunge it into his heart.

I did not possess a dagger, though.

My most formidable weapon of defense was a slate pencil—and the end of that was blunt.

I muttered some reply. What it was I forget, and hurried home.

In my hurry to leave the scene, I blurted out that my little sister was sick.

I did not have a little sister.

Thus does love make men liars.

Then came a period of torture.

Almost every day did I see Jane, for she took quite a liking to me.

Yet I wasn't happy.

I was wretched.

Rockets was the cause.

More and more was that detestable being with her.

Oh, why was I not a man to challenge Rockets to mortal combat, to excavate his lungs with a rapier, or die gloriously myself?

Rockets must have noticed my conduct, for I heard him speak to Jane one day.

"What ails young Dotty?" he asked.

"I don't know," said she.

"Can it be?"

"What?"

"That he is jealous?"

Then they both laughed, while I wished that I were dead.

His words must have set Jane thinking, for a fortnight later she spoke to me.

"I'm going away," said she, "and here is something to remember me by," and she gave me the picture of which I have spoken.

"Going away?" I cried.

"I am to be married to Mr. Rockets."

All that remained for me was death.

I hurried to the river near by.

Breathing a prayer that I would be forgiven, I—

Didn't throw myself in.

To-day Mrs. Rockets, surrounded by half a dozen olive branches, lives a few doors away, and Rockets and I are the best of friends.

So much for the illusions of boyhood.

NEWS OF THE DAY

The Vanderbilt Cup and the Grand Prix automobile races have been granted to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition for 1915. Hollis E. Cooley, chief of special events of the exposition, and W. L. Lughson, chairman of the racing committee, have returned from New York City, where they made the necessary preliminary arrangements for the races.

A motor-cycle fire-fighting force, said to be the first in Pennsylvania, has been organized as an auxiliary to Fire Company No. 1, of Glenolden. Five men, each of whom owns a motor cycle, comprise the force. One carries a chemical hose on his machine, another the chemical machine, and the three others carry sections of water hose. The motor-cycle squad can reach any place in the borough in less than two minutes after the sounding of an alarm.

One of the most unusual cases ever known at St. Louis, Mo., and one which is attracting the attention of many physicians, is that of Miss Lena Bearan, who began swallowing plum seeds when she was a small child, and now, at the age of 17, is beginning to cough them up. The physicians who are attending the young woman have sixty-three plum stones in their possession, and know that there are at least a dozen more which the girl coughed up before medical attention was called to the case.

While George Davis, of Millcreek, Ind., was working in an onion field near Walkerton, he was handed a telegram advising him that he was heir to a fortune of about \$20,000. A half hour later he had discarded his overalls, invested in a new suit of clothes and was on board a train for Milwaukee to prove his heirship. "I am going to own my own onion patch when I come back," was Davis' farewell as the train pulled out. He did not know that he had a wealthy relative until the telegram was received.

Thousands of bushels of kafir corn and feterita have been devoured by blackbirds in the northwestern part of Oklahoma, it is said, during the last few months, and the birds are becoming such a pest that commissioners of the counties affected are considering offering a bounty for them. The farmers, especially those living along the river, complain that the birds are becoming more numerous each year. The trees along the river are the natural habitat of the blackbirds. They swoop down on feed racks and grain in swarms.

Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer E. Arnold have just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding at the home of their daughter, Mrs. Fred De Bruin, Sparta, Wis. The occasion is one of exceptional note owing to the fact that Mr. Arnold's mother was present at this celebration. This venerable lady is in her 100th year. The five living children were also in attendance. They are Orville L. and

Clyde Arnold of Sparta, A. E. Arnold and Mrs. F. V. Wanke of Belleville, Wis., and Mrs. B. E. Sturdevint of Minneapolis.

When Warden Simpson, of the State prison at Jackson, Mich., goes before the Legislature next winter to ask for money to buy more land for prison farms he will have some figures that are likely to prove potent arguments. The figures show what has been done on one of the 80-acre farms purchased last year. The farm cost the State \$25,875, and this year was planted to string beans, after a crop of peas had already been taken off. These beans have been harvested and canned in the prison canning factory, and, figured at wholesale car-lot prices, are worth \$29,531.10. Thus the first year's crop has paid the whole cost of the farm, besides more than enough to pay for the cans in which the beans have been put up.

Edward Reimers and James P. Kelly, of Oregon City, Ore., are operating the only plant of its kind in the world. It produces eel oil, which is used in the manufacture of leather goods. A by-product is dried eel meat, which finds a ready market as chicken feed. The plant is running at full capacity, its average daily output being fifteen gallons of oil and 240 pounds of dried meat. Fishermen gather the eels with dipnets from the pools in the rocks around the falls. The fish are then taken to the plant, placed in a large vat, and cooked. After a time the valuable oil from the animals rises to the surface and is drained off. The meat is then ground and pressed, and still more oil is procured. From the grinders the eels, now almost powdered, are placed in driers and later are sacked. The government is said to be making a study of the process.

Rex Bassler, a youngster of six, living at Darien, Wis., has probably the strangest driving team in the world—eight snapping turtles, weighing about thirty pounds each and from fifty to seventy-five years old. Rex has tamed them, and they draw him in his express wagon like ponies, although they are not likely to shatter any speed records. The youngster learned that turtles could be tamed while watching his father, Max Bassler, catching turtles for market. He found they were appreciative of kindly treatment, bits of food, and soon was able to make the turtles follow him about. Persuading his father to give him some of the largest, he grouped them for a driving team, and they seem to enjoy the sport as much as he likes to ride behind them. The turtles in Rex's team are so old that their backs are covered with moss. The two largest are males and are savage to all but Rex. He can handle them as he likes and can stand on their backs and let them walk off with him. The team is kept in line by means of a wire harness. Holes were drilled in the backs of the leaders' shells and in the front of those following and all wired together.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

CALF HAS RABBIT'S TAIL.

William Wilson, a farmer, of Bedford, Ind., is the possessor of a freak calf. The animal, apparently healthy, is unable to walk, its movements being restricted to an erratic jumping motion. It was born without a tail, the nearest approach to such an appendage being a hairy growth, similar in form and size to that displayed by the rabbit. Hundreds of people have been attracted to the Wilson farm by reports of the calf's peculiarities.

PANAMA-PACIFIC BROOM EXHIBIT.

All of the brooms used by the Panama-Pacific International Exposition will be made in a working exhibit in the Palace of Manufactures, where a modern and fully equipped broom factory was recently installed. Eight machines will make it possible for the exhibitors to make every type of broom commonly used, or that the exposition will have any need for, from the heavy street-sweeping machine to the light pocket whisk broom. The eight machines include three winders, one sewer, one whisk, one trimmer, one stapler and one bander. The exhibit represents an expenditure of \$15,000, and is located in the southwest corner of the Palace of Manufactures.

FINNS COMING TO EXPOSITION.

Headed by Lauri Pikhala, former president of the Finnish Amateur Athletic Association and now trainer of the Finnish Olympic team, a small band of Finns, among whom are three world's champions, will start next spring for this country with the national championships at the San Francisco Exposition as their objective point.

Although the full strength of the team has not yet been announced, it is certain that Taipale and Niklander, the world's champion discus throwers, and Saaristo, the Olympic javelin champion, will make the trip.

Taipale, who beat the world's best at Stockholm in 1912, is the holder of the European record of 156 feet $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, which is just topped by Jim Duncan's record of 156 feet $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

He won both best hand and right and left hand throws at the last Olympic games, incidentally winning the two-handed event from his compatriot, Niklander, who holds the world's record of 283 feet 6 inches for this style of throwing.

Niklander, in addition to holding the world's record for the combination discus throw, also holds the Finnish record for one and two handed shot putting.

At Stockholm in 1912 Niklander was beaten by a very small margin by Ralph Rose and Pat McDonald. He has a record of 48 feet with the right hand and 41 feet 6 inches with left.

J. Saaristo, the Olympic champion ambidextrous javelin thrower, created a new world's record of 201 feet 3 inches with one hand at the last Olympic games. This performance, however, has since been surpassed.

Judging from our American javelin record, which is

some 30 feet short of Saaristo's mark, he should have little trouble in annexing the American title.

Niklander and Taipale, however, although perhaps more consistent than our Jim Duncan and Emil Muller, world's record holder and American champion, respectively, may not have such an easy time in their specialty.

The Finnish athletes will make an extended tour of this country both before and after the exposition games, which are scheduled for August 15, 1915.

QUEER HAPPENINGS.

Officials and lawyers of the Queens County Clerk's office, which is being reconstructed, have to climb ladders from floor to floor.

A Paterson, N. J., court decides the middle finger is the most valuable. Henry Hammersmith, who lost three fingers, gets eight weeks' pay for the first finger, five for the ring finger and thirty for the middle finger.

Struck by the steel point of an umbrella in the hands of a playmate, in the Bayonne High School, Lawrence Jarwi suffered a fracture of the skull.

A dead calf and an abandoned auto were found at Troy Hills, N. J. It is believed the motorists thought they had killed a man, and fled.

Charities Commissioner Kingsbury has plate glass substituted for marble partitions in his offices so that everyone can see what everyone is doing.

A big bird variously called an eagle, a buzzard and a duck-hawk swooped from Woolworth building gargoyle and caught a flying pigeon.

Burglars attacked safe of Berghoff Brewing Company in Jersey City with a sledge hammer. They didn't open it. It was not even locked, and besides, it contained nothing.

Patrolman calls at No. 8 Liberty place, Union Hill, N. J., to serve warrant on Gustave Bleaser, but finds him dead.

Because Edward Burns was "so gentlemanly about it," Frederick Reis, No. 123 East Eighty-eighth street, declines to prosecute him for assault.

Efforts to place Bushwick High School girls at real work in offices "for practice" and \$6 per week, fail—they all strike.

Honey bees in Westchester County accused of gathering grape juice, spoiling the crop.

Sophomores, Stevens Institute, turn loose on streets a freshman in baseball trousers, woman's shirtwaist and paper cap.

John Jacob, of No. 30 Croton Terrace, Yonkers, summoned John Willman to court for retaining a canary because its board bill was unpaid. Willman was ordered to return the bird and sue for price of the birdseed.

William Miller, of Sherwood Park, Yonkers, arrested and adjudged incompetent because he went joy-riding in automobiles and refused to pay his fare.



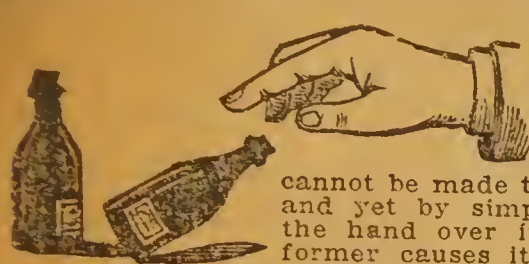
VANISHING AND RE-APPEARING EGG.—Very fine, easy to perform and it produces a marvelous and mystifying effect. Egg is made to appear and vanish right before the eyes. Beautifully made. Price, 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



SURPRISE LETTER DRUM.

Stung! That was one on you! The joke? You send a friend a letter. He opens it, and that releases the drum. Instantly the sheet of note paper begins to bang and thump furiously, with a ripping, tearing sound. Guaranteed to make a man with iron nerves almost jump out of his skin. You can catch the sharpest wisenheimer with this one. Don't miss getting a few. Price, 6c. each by mail. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about. Price, 10c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE BAD MOTHER-IN-LAW.

It consists of the eyes, nose and hair to make up a funny old woman's face, using your hand as the medium. The box containing them has full directions for making up the comical old mug. Then you use it as a subject for ventriloquism by merely altering the tones of your voice to make the funny figure appear to talk. Any child can use it and create more fun than an actor on the stage. Price, 8c. each, postpaid. A. A. WARFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE MAGIC CIGAR CASE.

A beautiful and perfect cigar case, made of imitation alligator and sealskin leather; worth a quarter as a cigar case alone. It can be shown full of cigars and instantly handed to a person, who, upon opening it, finds only an empty case. The box has a secret spring and a double case, and can be operated only by one in the secret. Full printed instructions sent with each case. Every smoker should have one. Price, 20c.; 2 for 35c. by mail, postpaid; one dozen by express, \$1.50. FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.



"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Price, 10c. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SNAP BACK MATCH SAFE.



Just out! A trick match safe. It is a beautifully nickel-plated box, of the size to hold matches. But when your friend presses the spring to take out a match, the lid flies back, and pinches his finger just hard enough to startle without hurting him. This is a ready!

Price, 15c. each by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC COINER.



A mystifying and amusing trick. Tin blanks are placed under the little tin cup and apparently coined into dimes. A real money-maker. Price, 20c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE PEG JUMPER.



A very effective pocket trick, easily to be performed by any one. A miniature paddle is shown. Central holes are drilled through it. A wooden peg is inside of the upper hole. Showing now both sides of the paddle, the performer causes, by simply breathing upon it, the peg to leave the upper hole, and appear in the middle one. Then it jumps to the lower hole, back to the middle one, and lastly to the upper hole. Both sides of the paddle are repeatedly shown. Price by mail, 15c. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

LITTLE CHECKER BOARDS.



Price 7 cents each by mail. They are made of durable colored cardboard, fold to the size of 6 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches, and are so handy in size that they can be carried in the pocket. They contain 24 red and black checkers, and are just as serviceable as the most expensive boards made. The box and lid can be fastened together in a moment by means of patent joints in the ends. Full directions printed on each box. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ITALIAN TRANSFER.



With this remarkable invention any one can transfer pictures or engravings from newspapers or books, and make perfect copies of butterfly and moth wings for scrap books. It is the dry transfer process, cleanly, handy and reliable, and the results secured will astonish you. Transfer is a gelatinous substance put up in cakes, one of which is enclosed with a wooden rubber and full directions for producing pictures, it requiring but a few moments to make the transfer. Any picture in the newspapers can be speedily reproduced in your album, or elsewhere, a perfect copy being made, and several copies can be made from the same picture. Butterfly and moth wings can also be pictured, all the beautiful colors and markings on the wings being transferred, and thus an interesting and instructive collection of insect forms can be made and permanently preserved in a scrap book. Both young and old will take delight in using Transfer, and the price is so low that all can afford to have this new process at command. Price only 10c., 3 for 25c.; one dozen, 75c., by mail postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE MAGIC CARD BOX.



One of the best and cheapest tricks for giving parlor or stage exhibitions. The trick is performed as follows: You request any two persons in your audience to each select a card from an ordinary pack of cards, you then produce a small handsome box made to imitate pebbled leather, which anyone may examine as closely as they will. You now ask one of the two who have selected cards to place his or her card inside the box, which being done, the lid is shut, and the box placed on the table. You then state that you will cause the cards to disappear and upon opening the box the card has vanished and the box found empty. The other card is now placed in the box; the lid is again closed and when the box is opened the first card appears as strangely as it went. Other tricks can be performed in various ways. You may cause several cards to disappear after they are placed in the box, and then you can cause them all to appear at once. You may tear a card up, place it in the box, and on lifting the cover it will be found whole and entire. In fact, nearly every trick of appearance and disappearance can be done with the Magic Card Box. Full printed instructions, by which anyone can perform the different tricks, sent with each box. Price, 20c. by mail, postpaid.

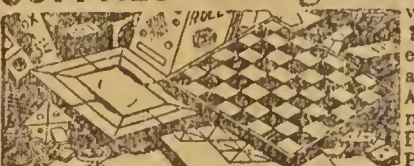
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

LOTS OF FUN



Ventriloquist Double Throat
Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; slug like a canary, and imitate birds and beasts of the field and forest. Loads of fun. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Send a dime and a 2-cent stamp for one dozen. DOUBLE THROAT CO., Dept. K, Frenchtown, N. J.

\$5. Prize Package 10c



This big Game and Fun Package will amuse the whole family all winter. 100 Great Games, Checkers, Chess, Dominoes, Fox and Geese, 9 Men Morris, Authors, Star Puzzle, Chinese Puzzle, 13 Puzzle, \$5 Prize Puzzle, Roman Cross Puzzle, 7 Wonders of World, Marriage Looking Glass, Husband and Wife's Commandments, 22 Popular Songs, 10 Comic Cards, 48 Magic Tricks, 70 Puzzles, 300 Jokes and Riddles, 12 Love Letters, 175 Ways to Flirt, How to Tell Fortunes, How to Make Others Obey You, &c. ALL the above and 500 other things to amuse, 10 CENTS, postpaid. Address STAR CO., 39 Clinton St., CHICAGO.

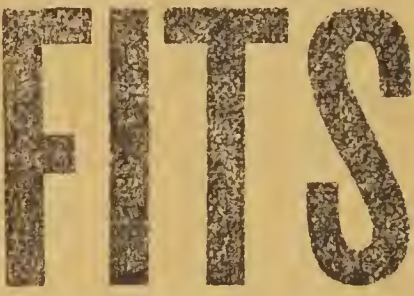
\$150 Per Month and Expenses

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A sample of my remedy has cured cases of Falling Sickness or Epilepsy. Prompt relief guaranteed. I PAY EXPRESSAGE on FREE TRIAL BOTTLE, if you cut out and RETURN advertisement. Sworn statements and hundreds of testimonials on file. Give AGE and FULL PARTICULARS. Dr. F. HARVEY ROOF

Dept. 1280, Station N, New York

JAPANESE TWIRLER.



A wonderful imported paper novelty. By a simple manipulation of the wooden handles a number of beautiful figures can be produced. It takes on several combinations of magnificent colors. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

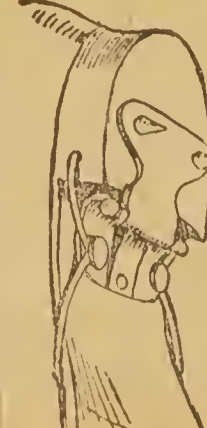
BUBBLE BLOWER.



With this device, a continuous series of bubbles can be blown. It is a wooden, cigar-shaped blower, enclosing a small vial, in which there is a piece of soap. The vial is filled with water, and a peculiarly perforated cork is inserted. When you blow in to the mouthpiece, it sets up a hydraulic pressure through the cork perforations and causes bubble after bubble to come out. No need of dipping into water once the little bottle is filled. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

LITTLE CLINCHERS



With a pair of these creepers clinched on your shoes you can defy the slipperiest ice or snow. No matter how slippery the road or how steep the hill, these claws of steel will carry you safely over them. A child can adjust them in 30 seconds. No nails, straps, screws or rivets are needed. They will not injure your shoes. No need to remove them indoors—simply fold the heel-plate forward, reversing the spikes under the instep. They are comfortable, durable and invisible. Just the thing for postmen, golfers, hunters, woodsmen, brakemen, miners and all who would insure life and limb in winter weather. 25 cents a pair, postpaid.

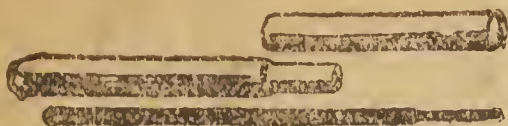
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



GLASS SCOPES.

This popular novelty is made of blown glass, and is to be filled with water. It then becomes a powerful magnifier suitable for enlarging any small object to an extraordinary size. Can be carried in the vest pocket. Price, 5c. each by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



GLASS PEN.—Patent glass pen, with nice dip, writes like any ordinary pen; each put up in wooden box. Price, 10c., postpaid.

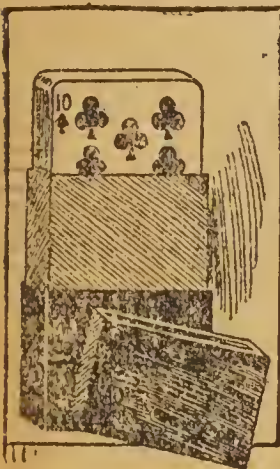
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



HUMANATONE.

The improved Humanatone. This flute will be found to be the most enjoyable article ever offered; nickel plated, finely polished; each put up in a box with full instruction how to use them. Price, 18c., postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.



VANISHING PACK OF CARDS.—You exhibit a neat black card case, you request from the audience a ring, a watch, bracelet, or other jewelry articles. You propose to fill the case with a pack of cards. After doing so, the pack of cards disappear from the case, and the jewelry novelties appear instead. Price by mail, postpaid, 35c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.



This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot. Price, 15c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE AUTOMATIC RUNNING MOUSE



This mouse is so nearly a perfect imitation of the live animal as to not only deceive the ladies, but to even deceive the cat. Inside each mouse is a set of clock work which you wind up with a key, then place the mouse on the floor and it will run rapidly in every direction in a circle across the floor backward and forward as if to get away. Suddenly set it agoing in a room where there are ladies, and you will have the fun of hearing them scream and jump upon the chairs to escape the little rodent. This mechanical mouse is well worth 50c., but we will sell it for 30c., and send it by mail postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

INITIAL WATCH FOB.



It has a neat enameled black strap, and small secure buckle, with a patent catch so that no watch can slip off. The handsome tortoise shell pendants are beautifully engraved with any initial you desire. The letter is fire gilt, cannot rub off, and is studded with nine Barrios diamonds. These fobs are the biggest value ever offered. Price, 25c. each, by mail, postpaid.

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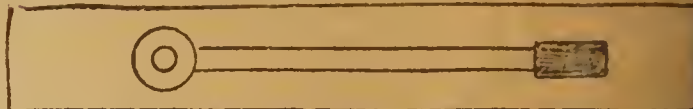
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